



## Nature Concerthall

### The winner of the Green Spider Network 2012 Best Practice competition

This year's 'Communication Initiative of the Year Award', launched in 2006 by the Green Spider Network (GSN), is awarded to an innovative and creative Latvian campaign that regularly organises open air concerts in a natural environment. For this award, all GSN members were invited to present their best examples of environmental communication campaigns.

The prize was awarded at the [Annual Meeting](#) of the Green Spiders in Germany, which took place on September 26th -28th

### An event to raise public awareness about the environment

Nature Concert hall is a free interactive open air concert on a biological topic, conducted in a natural habitat so that people will understand the topic more contextually. It aims at raising public awareness on nature protection by demonstrating the benefits of changing attitudes towards the environment. It targets a broad audience, which most effectively will increase understanding of pressures on the environment due to economic activity as well as increase interest in eco-tourism. It also highlights the importance of having a sustainable approach to economic development through stressing the effects it has on nature. Images of the 2012 edition can be watched online [here](#).

The general public in Latvia has both a low interest in and perception of the importance of the environment, which is often considered less important than other factors such as the economy. On the other hand, environmental scientists always are looking for new ways to communicate their fascinating knowledge to the general public. Moreover, also involved are Latvian ambient musicians who are also looking for new sources of inspiration, as well as wanting to explore new grounds.

Based on these assessments, a bottom-up process has been initiated among these three interested parties. The Nature Concerthall concept, which resulted from this bottom-up process, brings together the Arts, Science, and Education. It provides musicians with beautiful natural surroundings and new creative challenges. To target a large audience, a multidisciplinary approach has been chosen, which involves scientists and professionals from a variety of sectors. The first edition was launched in 2006, and it has since recurred each summer. Each event is focused on a Latvian zoological and botanical species. The 2012 event was about the Latvian fire bellied toad, scientifically called *Bombina Bombina*, which became the title of the event. The show is a light and video performance specially composed and conceived for the event and dedicated to this particular species. The performance is recorded and published in CD format.

The event and its promotional campaign were supported by an important network composed of NGOs as well as public and private organisations. The main partners of this event were the Ministry of the Environment and Regional Development, the Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, and the Latvian Nature Conservation Agency. They provided financing and scientific expertise. Nature Concerthall was also supported by the municipality of Demene (within the district of Daugavpils), where it was organised, and by local actors like the University of Daugavpils and the Latgale Zoo. Private companies dealing with topics related to the event, such as a Latvian plywood company and a forest holdings company were also supportive.



Nature Concerthall 2012 poster

### Facts and figures

- First edition in 2006 : 700 visitors
- 2 concerts in 2011 : 11 000 visitors
- 4 000 visitors in 2012, in one of the most remote areas of Latvia
- More than 100 volunteers in 2012
- 5 hours show
- 1 000 Facebook hits in 2 weeks
- 6 propositions received within 2 weeks to host the 2013 event



People gathering before the concert



## Using Education for a long term impact

As changing behaviours is a long process, education has been an important component of the project since its inception. Education not only helps to raise people's awareness but also ensures behavioural changes in the long run. To increase popularity, Nature Concerthall was developed and organised as a non-commercial project offering free entrance for all. The 2012 event was organised in the southern Latvian region of Daugavpils, which is close to the borders of Belarus and Lithuania. Attendees were invited to arrive earlier or to stay longer in order to visit the region. Nature Concerthall has demonstrated that the inclusion of Arts with Science and Education facilitates making the environment appealing to a new audience. Education was also integral to the communication process of this event. To highlight the creativity of science, scientists were promoted as visibly as musicians and other celebrities.

The event typically begins with small workshops developed by scientists. In 2012, there were 20 work stations where people had a hands-on experience learning about the fire bellied toad *Bombina Bombina* and its environment. These work stations gave people the opportunity to experience different ways of discovering nature; they could touch, read, hear, and create different things. These workshops were followed by a story of the 'Fire bellied toad life cycle', which called on what they had just learned. In doing this, participants were aided in understanding why it was important to protect this species and its environment. This part combined science with operatic elements. The third event was conceived as a quiet opera, with a musical performance complemented by a violin quartet and *Bombina Bombina* toad singing.



The 2012 Concert CD



An extract from the show

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*“The reason for the success of Nature Concerthall is that everyone finds his own interest in it, and we manage to twist it towards the environment aspect .”*

*Silvija Kalnins, Nature Concerthall Association*

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## A broad communication strategy to reach a large audience

Since the Nature Concerthall aims at increasing the general public's awareness of the environment, the promotional campaign uses a variety of media. A two-tiered approach was adopted to advertise the event. At the municipal level, the campaign used small local media like newspapers and radio channels, which were best able to reach the local population. In those media, the goal was to explain the event, to raise awareness on its particular topic, and to promote the values of the municipality and its area. At the national level, promotional work was more “standard” or focused on the use of national mass media. [Commercials](#) were broadcast on TV and radio channels across the country, informing the public about the event venue and dates. A partnership was established with Radio 101, one of the major radio channels in Latvia.

Contributing to the promotion of the event were interviews with key musicians, the art director, and scientists that appeared in magazines for different target or interest groups (women, nature, and fashion). Interviews also offered the opportunity to draw attention to scientists involved in the project, which in turn contributed to raising interest in the event and nature protection. Special press conferences were organised to attract media attention, and these press conferences included short live performances by involved musicians and guest appearances by the event's main figure, the fire-bellied toad. Furthermore, a month prior to the event, a special press conference was organised in the city of Daugavpils that drew exceptional TV, radio, print, and electronic media coverage. The event also was promoted through various social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter

## Partner organisations

- Ministry of the Environment and Regional Development
- Latvian Environmental Protection Fund
- Latvian Nature Conservation Agency
- Daugavpils region
- Demene municipality
- Platforma Records
- Homo ecos (NGO)
- LNT TV, Radio 101, Latvian Radio, regional radio stations
- And more!