

An excellent musician of a non-academic mind-set who bravely tests unusual colours and puzzles out complex musical ideas. – Beata Baublinskienė; *Lithuanian Music Link No. 12*

Mindaugas Bačkus is an accomplished musician who has dabbled in many forms of artistic practice – from pioneering the revival of baroque cello in Lithuania to championing diverse concert programmes that attract broader audiences as the Art Director of the Klaipėda Chamber Orchestra. – Jessica Maxwell; *ELIA publication*

Klaipėda is becoming a cello capital thanks to this musician who breaks the standards and builds up a new cello image in the minds of the audience ... – Klaipėda International Cello Festival 2017

With confidence in the composers, Mindaugas touches intuitively and yet perceptively upon the points most favourable for this highly original ‘sound theatre’ and this is where the individuality of cellist Mindaugas Bačkus reveals itself in all its impressive versatility. – Edmundas Gedgaudas; *Lithuanian Music Link No. 16*

An ebullient performer with great stage presence and enviable versatility in terms of style and modes of presentation, Mindaugas Bačkus has been recognized as one of the most distinguished Lithuanian cellists on the concert stage, in recital, and as a dynamic component of chamber ensembles and orchestras. His wide-ranging musical interests are being continuously revealed in his repertoire, which encompasses Western classical music for cello from baroque to contemporary, as well as through intense exploration of his instrument’s (electro)acoustic, expressive and theatrical possibilities. His insatiable desire to discover new worlds of cello sound has thus far yielded multiple collaborations with the living composers, jazz musicians, early music ensembles, theatre and dance companies.

Contemporary and early music are two recurrent themes in his solo projects and work with various formations. He plays the baroque cello and takes active part in early music projects as member of the Baltic States Baroque Orchestra and the Brevis Consort. Alone and together with the Chordos String Quartet (2003–2009) and the Disobedient Ensemble (since 2006) he has been frequently heard perform 20th- and 21st-century works and the world premieres of new Lithuanian pieces at the local new music festivals (including Gaida, Jauna Muzika, Iš Arti, Marių Klavyrai, Permainų Muzika, Nepaklusniųjų Žemė, Vilnius Jazz and Birštonas Jazz festivals) and further afield (including Norfolk Chamber Music Festival in Connecticut, MaerzMusik in Berlin, Klangspuren in Schwaz, Upbeat in Sweden and Norway). Most of the works featured on his two CDs (*el cello*, 2005, and *Pas de deux*, 2007), in which Bačkus appears as a soloist and dedicatee, show his deep commitment to the nurturing and promotion of Lithuanian contemporary music.

Born in Vilnius into a musical family, Mindaugas Bačkus received all levels of formal musical training and education in his hometown, graduating from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in 1998 and earning the licentiate of arts in 2009. He went on to pursue cello studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in ~~the~~ Manchester (1999–2001) with the world-celebrated cellists Ralph Kirshbaum and Karine Georgian, obtaining an international artist diploma and appearing as recitalist in England and Scotland. He also honed his techniques and performance skills in numerous master classes and internships in Germany, Holland, UK, and USA with Anner Bylsma, Viola de Hoog, Tsojoshi Tsutsumi, David Geringas, among many others. At the same time he gained experience as an orchestra musician, working with

the Kremerata Baltica, Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, Vilnius Chamber Orchestra (1993–1996) and the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra (1996–2005, leader of the cello section from 1998), and cello teacher (notably, as a faculty member of the National Academy for Schoolchildren organized by Mstislav Rostropovich Charity and Support Foundation, since 2007).

In 2009, he moved to Klaipėda where he took up a position of Artistic Director of the Klaipėda Chamber Orchestra and continued to share his knowledge and experience with the younger generation of cellists at the Stasys Šimkus Conservatory (2010–2014), Eduardas Balsys Gymnasium of Arts (2010–2014), and Klaipėda University Academy of Music (since 2010). He **was also invited to give master classes at the Royal Irish Academy of Music (2014) and Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowi (2016), and served as a jury member in Augusts Dombrovskis International Competition in Riga (2017).**

Together with the Klaipėda Chamber Orchestra he toured the Murten Classics Festival, took part in David Geringas' anniversary celebrations at the Berlin Philharmonic, appeared at Zürich's Tonhalle and at Helsinki's Temppeliaukio Church. In 2017, he founded the International Cello Festival and Competition in Klaipėda – a week of cello concerts and competition rounds, which has drawn over a hundred cello professionals and aspiring young musicians from around the globe to the port town in Western Lithuania. This year Bačkus attempts to organize the first International Violoncello Academy in Klaipėda and continues to work on bringing cello music from the concert halls to the most unexpected places.

Over the years he **has** performed with **a host of internationally acclaimed musicians, which have thus far included** David Geringas, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Andres Mustonen, Mūza Rubackytė, Reinhard Goebel, Alexander Paley, Sven Helbig, Geir Draugsvoll, Kaspar Zehnder, Dmitry Sinkovsky as well as **some of** the most prominent Lithuanian artists.