

# Book Review

# Viet Nam

# Overtures

Alan Kinear<sup>+</sup> International Editor

*Viet Nam Overtures* chronicles the 10 year music, dance and opera exchange program between Norway and Vietnam led by Geir Johnson the Director of an organization called Transposition and former director of director of the Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival.

Transposition has conducted nearly 300 cross-cultural programs that have positively impacted the lives of hundreds of musicians and performers both in Norway and Vietnam as well as dozens of international performers.

- It can claim the following successes:
- Young students reaching the finals in international competitions
- Development of a new sector of arts organizations that take care of composer's rights
- New program in instrumental pedagogy at the VNAM
- Opera and ballet productions in Ho Chi Minh City
- International studying and touring opportunities for young talent
- Establishment of the first chamber music course in Viet Nam
- Assisting in the building of a new concert hall in Ha Noi
- Raising the awareness of how to build and maintain audiences

It is an captivating read as it brings together the personal perspective and stories from twelve closely involved participants across its four sections. The first covers the history and politics detailing the challenges that were overcome in such a long distance and cross-cultural endeavor. The second discusses the pedagogy and finding the common ground in striving for performing excellence both for the performers and education. Additionally, support for modernizing the instructional foundations for ongoing instruction was discussed. Thirdly, there are detailed accounts on covering all the behind-the-scenes issues in bringing to the stage a

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world class artistic production. The fourth section delves into the future challenges in the role of music and culture in social development. The question of does culture provide the foundation for a creative and economical viable community or does an economical viable community in turn support cultural expression and creativity? is reviewed. One side has the current view is that people like to live in a culturally rich environment so such communities tend to be more attractive and consequently more economically sound and creative.

Geir posits “How do cultural activities contribute to create an urban cultural engine?” and explores this further after asking “Is the arts a cultural engine?”

Viet Nam Overtures is an engaging and informative read for anyone pursuing a cross-cultural endeavor that is brought to life by twelve personal accounts and nine snapshots into one successful and long lived exchange program between the East and the West in modern urban society. The nine snapshots are a up-close window into how Transposition worked its cross-cultural magic.

Viet Nam Overtures is an attractive book with content, images and design blending together to immerse the reader in the full behind-the-scenes experience of what it takes to succeed both artistically and cross-culturally. It's a model of artistic creativity paired with social sharing and caring.



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