

The Head of State, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today awarded folk musician Jalmar Vabarna the Young Cultural Figure Award of the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic at the Office of the President.

Jalmar Vabarna has contributed considerably to the popularisation of traditional music in both Estonia and abroad, and to teaching and conveying the skills of traditional music. He is one of the most well-known and acknowledged performers of traditional music in Estonia.

"In his career as a young musician, Jalmar has expanded his own understanding of traditional music as well as that of his audience," said President Ilves in his address. The Head of State added that he has been following Vabarna's progress for several years and admires his ability to create a fusion of modern and traditional.

"Verses created by our ancestors are our oil and our oil resources will never be depleted. I invite all of you to respect and safeguard our roots," said Jalmar Vabarna.

Vabarna plays in the Zetod, Trad.Attack!, Curly Strings, Klapp and Viljandi Guitar Trio bands. In 2011, he graduated from the University of Tartu Viljandi Cultural Academy and spent a year as an exchange student in the Ingesund Music College of University of Karlstad, Sweden. To date, he has been performing concerts for more than 10 years in more than 20 countries and contributed to over 15 albums. For three years, he has shaped the heritage music programme at the Estonian Traditional Music Centre in Viljandi and acted as one of the initiators of the Young Musicians Society. Vabarna has also composed music for several stage plays.

Last year, he brought old Seto songs back to the Song Celebration and performed a piece entitled "Velekese' noorõkõsõ" with his band, Zetod. Conductor Hirvo Surva praised the methods employed by Vabarna to teach boys' choirs a song in Seto for the Song Celebration: "He inspires and encourages others to develop an interest in our musical mother tongues and uses smart methods to accomplish his goals."

A cultural figure of Estonian descent aged 35 or younger whose accomplishments in the field of creative arts have won wide recognition or who has, in his or her works or activities in the field

of creative arts, considerably contributed to making Estonia and Estonian culture known outside the country can apply for the award. The award money is 5,000 euros.

Previous laureates of the Young Cultural Figure Award include dramatist Eero Epner (2014), pianist Mihkel Poll (2013), jewel artist Tanel Veenre (2012), composer Risto Joost (2011); editor of the Ööülikool (Night University) series Jaan Tootsen (2010); actor, theatre director and translator Marius Peterson (2009); poet Kristiina Ehin (2008); ballerina Luana Georg (2007); composer Helena Tulve (2006); theatre director Jaanus Rohumaa (2005); conductor Anu Tali (2004); literary critic Jan Kaus (2003) and composer Tõnu Kõrvits (2002).

Several special awards have also been presented. In 2014, a special award went to gallerist Olga Temnikova. In 2002, a special award was presented to folk musician Krista Sildoja, and in 2011 the special award went to Igor Kotjuh, who is a poet, essayist, translator and individual who is shaping a society liberated from prejudice.

The Young Cultural Figure Award is financed by **Indrek Neivelt**, a member of the Board of the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic.

Office of the President
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