

OKRA PLAYGROUND AT WOMEX16

Okra Playground, formed in 2010, was selected as an only Finnish ensemble to the official showcase program of *World Music Expo WOMEX16* this year. WOMEX is an international networking platform for the world music industry. The annual five-day event comprises a bustling Trade Fair, Showcase Festival, Conference, and Film programme, as well as festive Opening and Award ceremonies and offers an unique chance for all sorts of musical acts to perform for around two thousand delegates. The 22nd edition of WOMEX will take place in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, from Wednesday, 19 to Sunday, 23 October 2016.

Okra Playground is an ensemble made up of folk and rhythmic music professionals. This six-person band's fresh music captivates the listener with its hypnotic beat and mystical energy. The kantele and bowed lyre, both ancient folk instruments, coexist in a new, exciting symbiosis with modern instruments and soundscapes. The music resulting from this interesting combination has roots deep in the Finnish soil, but its tallest branches spread out towards the furthest shores of world music. The strong voices of the three female singers, as well as the age-old lyrics, simultaneously take the listener to far-off places and close to home.

The band was originally formed when one of the female vocalist, Essi Muikku, wanted to bring together a nice group to play good music.

“...Okra Playground have rewritten the rules of how to be at the forefront of contemporary world music while remaining true to their roots. This album alone makes them true ambassadors for Finnish music.” (Finnish Music Quarterly 4/2016)

Okra Playground's long-awaited debut album *Turmio* was released in October 2015. The album has ever since been warmly received gaining praises in the new and old mediums. *Turmio* also made it to few listings of best albums of 2015 (*Glue at Rosvot* blog and Spanish radio program *O Recanto do Corcovado*). In July German label *Nordic Notes* put *Turmio* out in Central Europe. During the summer 2016 Okra Playground performed at several festivals including *Haapavesi Folk Music Festival*, and *Flow Festival* in Helsinki finishing their summer gig series at *Nordsjøfestivalen in Farsund*, Norway at the end of August.

Last summer Okra Playground also released their first video. The studio live of the song *Turmio* can be seen on youtube: https://youtu.be/_b6KQ0QRFVs

Okra Playground is:

Päivi Hirvonen: vocals, violin, bowed lyre

Maija Kauhanen: vocals, kantele

Essi Muikku: vocals, kantele

Sami Kujala: electric bass

Veikko Muikku: accordion, keyboards

Tatu Viitala: percussions

<http://okraplayground.fi/>