

## FACTS - DATA - PEOPLE: NEUE STIMMEN AT A GLANCE

The International Singing Competition will be held for the 20th time in 2024.

NEUE STIMMEN is a sponsorship project of the Liz Mohn Foundation for young international opera talents. NEUE STIMMEN was initiated and founded by Liz Mohn in 1987. The program aims to prepare and support young singers for their careers in the long term. The core element of the program is the singing competition of the same name, to which talented opera singers from all over the world apply every two years. They go through various application phases in order to gain one of around 40 highly desired places in the final round. There they can look forward not only to prizes, but also to valuable personal contacts with theatre directors, agents and talent scouts from the world of opera. The NEUE STIMMEN program has continually expanded its remit to include tailor-made offers: since 1997, talented young singers have been able to attend the masterclass for in-depth career support and, since 2013, showcase their skills at prizewinners' concerts. Further concert appearances, coaching seminars and numerous collaborations with universities, opera studios and festivals round off the broad spectrum of NEUE STIMMEN.

### **Organiser**

Liz Mohn Foundation, President: Liz Mohn

### **Goal**

The discovery, consulting and long-term support of talented young people, as well as guiding them towards a national and international career.

### **Participants**

In the first application phase between December 2023 and February 2024, 1,002 young singers from 73 countries applied. As in previous years, NEUE STIMMEN once again relied on a digital application process in the first of the three selection rounds. In addition to information on age, vocal specialism, training and stage experience, the submission of two opera arias on video was mandatory. Around 2,000 videos were viewed by the members of the pre-selection jury. A total of 627 participants qualified for the international pre-selections. This year, the best 40 talents from 19 countries will take part in the final round in Gütersloh. The age limit for applications is 30 years for both men and women. Once again, talents from almost every continent have applied for NEUE STIMMEN. This international character shows how music has the power to unite people from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Pre-Selections**

The second round of the competition, called the live auditions, took place between April 11 and June 9, 2024. Applicants had the opportunity to present themselves at thirteen international pre-selections in Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, Yerevan, Cape Town, London, Milan, Munich, New York City, Paris, Warsaw, Vienna and Zurich.

## **Final round and concerts in Gütersloh**

The final round will take place from October 5-11, 2024 in the Stadthalle Gütersloh. After a two-day audition on October 7 and 8, 16 singers will have qualified for the semi-final concert on October 9, which will be hosted by Austrian music editor Teresa Vogl this year. In the semi-final concert with piano accompaniment, the jury will select the eight best talents to take part in the final concert on October 11. In the final, cash prizes worth 60,000 euros will be awarded. The Duisburg Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Jonathan Darlington, will accompany the final. Holger Noltze will host the final evening in German. Both concerts will be live streamed.

## **Prizes**

Cash prizes worth 66,000 euros are awarded for first to third place in both the women's and the men's category. NEUE STIMMEN also awards an audience prize and sponsorship prizes. The direct dialogue with artistic directors, festival directors and agents as well as individual advice from the jury members during the final round are particularly valuable for successful applicants.

## **Endowment prizes 2024**

1st prize women: 15,000 euros; 1st prize men: 15,000 euros  
2nd prize women: 10,000 euros; 2nd prize men: 10,000 euros  
3rd prize women: 5,000 euros; 3rd prize men: 5,000 euros

## **Encouragement prizes:**

### Brian Dickie Young Talent Award

This prize will be awarded for the third time in 2024. Value with 5,000 euros in prize money, it serves to promote and encourage very young talents whose promising development potential is to be particularly supported.

### Talent Development Prize

The co-operation with the Fondazione Mascarade in Florence will be continued. The Talent Development Prize enables a young singer to take part in a one-week training program at the Mascarade Opera Studio.

### Patagonia Voice Award

The Fundación Teatro del Lago offers a singer the exceptional opportunity to perform in the southernmost opera house in the world, which is internationally recognized for its high acoustic quality, as part of the Patagonia Festival in Chile.

### Junior Jury Prize

For the first time, there will be a junior jury at this year's competition. Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 will be awarded their own prize of 500 euros in the semifinals. The criteria for the award will be determined by the young jurors themselves.

## Audience award

The impression made on the audience is one of the key aspects of a singer's career. In the final concert, the audience once again votes for their favorite performance and thus honors a special singer personality. The prize is likewise worth 500 euros.

## **Jury**

- Dominique Meyer, Chairman of the Jury, Artistic Director of La Scala in Milan
- Brian Dickie, former General Director of the Chicago Opera Theatre
- Samuel Gelber, Director of Artistic Planning and Operations at the National Opera Washington at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- Sophie de Lint, Director of the Dutch National Opera
- Sophie Joyce, Casting Director of the Opéra National de Paris
- Bernd Loebe, Artistic Director of the Frankfurt Opera
- Ricarda Merbeth, Kammersängerin and former NEUE STIMMEN participant in the 1991 competition year (new member since 2024)
- Christoph Seufferle, Opera Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin
- Elisabeth Sobotka, Artistic Director of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden Berlin
- Evamaria Wieser, Casting Director of the Salzburg Festival and European Casting Consultant of the Lyric Opera Chicago

## **Former finalists with outstanding success**

Nathalie Stutzmann, Vesselina Kasarova, René Pape, Roman Trekel, Hanno Müller-Brachmann, Ricarda Merbeth, Michael Volle, Anna Samuil, Franco Fagioli, Maxim Mironov, Marina Rebeka, Kristine Opolais, Christiane Karg, Olga Bezsmertna, Jakub Józef Orliński, Kristina Mkhitarian, Nadine Sierra, Elsa Dreisig, Emily D'Angelo, Long Long, Nomulelo Yende and Anna El-Khashem

## **Unique support for the singers from NEUE STIMMEN**

- Unlike other singing competitions, the pre-selections for NEUE STIMMEN take place worldwide. Every talent who receives an invitation to the live auditions is personally heard by one or more members of the NEUE STIMMEN jury directly.
- There are no financial barriers: Singers who are invited to the final round in Gütersloh do not have to bear any travelling or hotel costs. The Liz Mohn Foundation covers the costs of travel expenses, accommodation and meals and provides pianists and rehearsal rooms free of charge during the competition. Apart from travelling to the live audition in person, singers will not incur any other costs during the competition.
- Through the contacts of NEUE STIMMEN, the singers have access to a high-quality network of top decision-makers in the opera business. This includes the jury members themselves, who work directly with the young talents.

## Key dates since the competition was founded

- **1987:** First competition under the name 'Neue Stimmen - Europäischer Sängerwettbewerb'.
- **1989:** Introduction of the biennial rhythm.
- **1993:** The competition becomes international: previously limited to participants studying in Europe, singers from all over the world are now allowed to apply. In addition, a pre-selection takes place abroad for the first time. The name changes with the regulations: the 'European' becomes an 'International Competition'.
- **1995:** The 'contest' becomes the 'competition'. Since then, the contest has operated under the title: NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition.
- **1997:** The first masterclass takes place in Gütersloh, which has since established itself as a permanent feature between the competition years.
- **1999:** More than 1,000 singers apply for the first time.
- **2003:** The competition is now presented in a fiery red color. The old logo, the stylized note, is consigned to the archives. With the introduction of a standardized evaluation system and a broad compulsory repertoire, the creation of a dedicated website and a tool for applicant management and the production of the first DVD recording, important changes are made to the content and structure of the competition.
- **2012:** A new format is launched: in addition to the masterclass with twelve to 15 participants, four singers are invited to a Lied Masterclass for the first time in 2012. NEUE STIMMEN celebrates its 25th anniversary with an anniversary concert on December 1, 2012 in Gütersloh.
- **2013:** A new prizewinner structure is introduced, and the total amount of cash prizes is increased. In addition to existing concert activities, annual concerts with prizewinners are held in Berlin at the Bertelsmann Representative Office, Unter den Linden 1, from 2013.
- **2015:** The age limit for participation is lowered for the first time. It is 28 years for female singers and 30 years for male singers. The 'Creating Careers' claim is added to the logo to further emphasize the funding activities.
- **2017:** The NEUE STIMMEN competition celebrates its 30th anniversary. Moreover, the Creating Careers initiative is strengthened to further support the careers of singers. Performance opportunities at various opera houses, coaching sessions and open master classes are initiated and give young people access to the international partner network of NEUE STIMMEN.
- **2019:** The NEUE STIMMEN alumni network is increasingly becoming an indispensable part of the project. Insights and experiences of former participants promote the further development of the competition and all project modules. Furthermore, the publication of the scientific study "The Future of Opera Singing" follows.
- **2021/2022:** The global coronavirus pandemic has made the postponement of the final round planned for 2021 unavoidable, and with it the entire application process. NEUE STIMMEN uses video applications for the first application phase for the first time. The format met with a positive response, with the number of

applicants remaining at the high level of previous years despite the difficult circumstances. In 2022 NEUE STIMMEN celebrates its 35th anniversary.

- **2024:** The 20th NEUE STIMMEN competition has some new features. For this year's competition, young people from the opera and music sector will be specifically invited to the semi-final as guests and jurors. A junior jury will award its own prize, with the young jurors themselves determining the criteria for the award. There are also plans to provide insights into a digital opera performance using virtual reality and to set up a network of close contacts from the cultural sector. In the long term, this is intended to create a connection to the support of young people on a wider scale.