



Countdown to the 6th European Opera Singing Competition DEBUT 2012

Official opening date for applications: April 1, 2012

Countdown to round 6: from September 24 to 29, 2012, the curtain will be raised for up-and-coming national and international singers of opera music at DEBUT 2012. Distinguished vocal performances and an unforgettable atmosphere – these have been the hallmarks of the European Opera Singing Competition DEBUT ever since it was first initiated back in 2002. Young opera singers will face a jury of eminent experts in the course of the competition week, which will wind up with a gala concert. DEBUT 2012 is endowed with prizes worth more than €30,000. Professor Edda Moser (Kammersängerin), the well-known soprano and Cologne professor of singing, and BDI President Professor Hans-Peter Keitel will act as joint patrons.

For several years now, the DEBUT competition has attracted considerable international attention in the opera world. With two new patrons and more prize money than ever before, DEBUT 2012 is all set to enter another round. The organizers are expecting some 350 applications not just from Germany but from all over Europe; after all, DEBUT has earned itself a reputation as a launching pad for young singers hoping to embark on an international career. Held every second year, the competition is open to talented newcomers in the following vocal categories: soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto, tenor, counter-tenor, baritone and bass. The deadline for submitting applications is June 30, 2012.

From one triumph to the next in the opera business: Hila Fahima, winner of DEBUT 2010

DEBUT 2010, the last DEBUT event, set several new records: a total of seven singers – the cream of almost 300 original candidates, equivalent to yet another substantial rise in applications – took part in the final, in which thirteen prizes and special prizes awaited the best of the best. Twenty-six performers of both sexes, hailing from

April 2, 2012

DEBUT, the European Opera Singing Competition, supports young opera singers hoping to embark on an international career. It is open to the following vocal categories: soprano, mezzo-soprano and alto, tenor, counter-tenor, baritone and bass. Held every second year since 2002, DEBUT gives ambitious newcomers a unique opportunity to showcase their talents.



The winners of DEBUT 2010:
Han-Sung Yoo, Hila Fahima and
Norman Nahoun

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an impressive nineteen different countries, were shortlisted in the autumn of 2010 in an internal selection process and subsequently invited to Weikersheim. The ultimate winners were Hila Fahima, soprano, Israel (Golden Victoria), Han-Sung Yoo, baritone, Korea (Silver Victoria) and Norma Nahoun, soprano, France (Bronze Victoria). Today, all of them are well on their way to a successful career in opera: Hila Fahima, meanwhile 25, holds a scholarship at the German National Opera House in Berlin. Her victory at DEBUT 2010 inspired rapturous headlines like "Perfection has never had such a human face". Norma Nahoun, aged 26, is about to join the Young Ensemble at the Semperoper opera house in Dresden in May 2012.

A partnership with genuine "added value" DEBUT 2012 and Jeunesses Musicales Germany

The partnership with Jeunesses Musicales Germany (JMD) that was entered into in the run-up to DEBUT 2010 will definitely be pursued further, the concept having proved to be a great success from the word go: "JMD helps us achieve our goal of promoting talented young singers", said DEBUT General Manager Ulrich Boelcke. Parallel to the qualifying rounds, the profile for DEBUT 2012 will include workshops on stage appearance training and presence that will give the participating singers an excellent grounding for their future work on the opera stage. "Regardless of whether or not they win a prize, everyone taking part in the competition will pick up some useful tips for their fledgling career", explained Patrick Bialdyga, Artistic Director at JMD. A freelance director based in Berlin, he is also responsible for "Young Opera Schloss Weikersheim", JMD's traditional International Opera Academy.

DEBUT 2012

The gala evening with the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen on September 29, 2012 will provide a magnificent setting for the finalists competing for the Golden, Silver and Bronze Victorias in the Wandelhalle, Bad Mergentheim. Both the qualifying rounds and the semi-finals preceding this special highlight will be held in nearby Weikersheim Castle, where DEBUT's partner, Jeunesses Musicales Germany, runs a Music Academy of

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international repute. The partnership with Jeunesses Musicales Germany and Weikersheim Castle Music Academy has sharpened the focus of DEBUT's declared sponsorship philosophy. Through its prestigious "Young Opera Schloss Weikersheim" festival, JMD contributes with acknowledged expertise and international contacts. And with its historic castle home, it is also one of the Hohenlohe / Main-Tauber region's best known cultural players. To Manfred Wittenstein (sponsor, initiator, President of WITTENSTEIN AG and Past President of the German Engineering Federation (VDMA)), the Competition represents a unique contribution to the classical music scene not only in Baden-Württemberg but also in Germany and indeed the whole of Europe, forging an unusual but highly successful link between industry, technology and culture.

The jury

One reason for DEBUT's remarkably high standard is that it gives young opera singers (age limit: 34 for men and 32 for women) a rare opportunity to appear in a competition with such a strong international profile in the presence of a top-flight jury. The jury this year will be chaired by Professor Harald Stamm (Kammersänger). All the jury members are eminent players in the opera world, drawn from the fields of singing, management and journalism. The winners will receive their awards on September 29, 2012.

The DEBUT 2012 jury will be made up as follows:

- Professor Harald Stamm (Kammersänger), Hamburg / Berlin, Jury Chairman
- Karan Armstrong (Kammersängerin), Berlin
- Clarry Bartha, Boxberg
- Dr. Karl- Dietrich Gräwe, music journalist, Berlin
- Guy Montavon, General Manager, Theater Erfurt, Erfurt
- Ralf Tiedemann, Editor in Chief, "Das Opernglas" magazine, Hamburg
- Professor Gerd Uecker, Manager of the Semperoper opera house in Dresden until 2010, Munich
- Denette Whitter, Opera and Concert Academy, Henfenfeld Castle

Artistic Director: Patrick Bialdyga

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Conditions of participation:

Opera singers who are European or Israeli citizens and whose principal place of residence has been in the geographical territory of Europe or Israel for at least two years prior to the start of the competition are eligible to participate. Applicants should have previous stage experience.

The Competition will be held in Weikersheim and Bad Mergentheim (Main-Tauber district, Germany). Following qualifying rounds for all participating singers in the Weikersheim Castle Arsenal from September 24 to 26, 2012, the event will wind up with a gala concert to be given by the finalists in the Wandelhalle, Bad Mergentheim, on September 29. Accompanied by the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen, conducted by Catherine Rückwardt, the selected finalists will face the jury one more time. The gala evening – hosted by Jan Hofer, Senior Newsreader on ARD's television news – will come to a fitting conclusion with the presentation of generous prizes to the winners. As in 2010, the concert will be broadcast on SWR2 radio.

The competition and its history

The DEBUT competition has forged a novel link between industry, technology and culture since 2002. It manages without any form of public sponsorship and as such is completely independent. Mechatronics specialist WITTENSTEIN AG subsidises every DEBUT contest with a six-figure amount. The competition was initiated by Dr. Manfred Wittenstein, the group's President: "We conceived it as a special gift – to ourselves and to the broader community to which we belong. We believe that life and work form part of an indivisible whole which needs to be defined anew every day. Whatever we do, performing at the highest level is fulfilling in itself – and in this sense our day-to-day business world is an integral element of our corporate culture."

To DEBUT General Manager Ulrich Boelcke, the creativity of talented young players has a strong relevance for the engineering sector: "Engineering companies like the WITTENSTEIN group derive their strength from highly creative minds. Change and innovation are immensely important to us."

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Multiple opportunities for public performances and a highly distinctive sculpture for the winners

In addition to cash prizes worth more than €30,000, the most promising careers will also be furthered notably with opportunities for public performances at the opera houses in Erfurt and Würzburg, to name but two. As one of the special prizes, Jeunesses Musicales Germany will offer a role in its production of Mozart's "Don Giovanni" at the "Young Opera Schloss Weikersheim 2013" festival. Moreover, the sculptures that will be presented to the three winners, especially designed by Viennese artist Professor Ernst Fuchs and donated by Kunstgießerei Strassacker, the internationally renowned bronzecasting company, are truly distinctive objects.

Photo:

DEBUT 2012 is seeking successors to (from left to right) Han-Sung Yoo (Silver Victoria 2010), Hila Fahima (Golden Victoria 2010) and Norma Nahoun (Bronze Victoria 2010).

Texts and photographs in printable quality can be downloaded from <http://www.debut.de>.

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