

PRESS RELEASE

Start of Applications and New Chair of the Jury for the NEUE STIMMEN 2026 International Singing Competition

The application phase for one of the world's most prestigious classical singing competitions is beginning. The new Chair of the Jury is Alexander Neef, director of the Opéra national de Paris.

Gütersloh, Dezember 8, 2025. The NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition of the Liz Mohn Foundation is entering its 21st edition. The application period runs from now until February 1, 2026. An important change this year is that Alexander Neef, director of the Opéra national de Paris, will assume the role of Chairman of the Jury. The 51-year-old German is one of Europe's leading cultural managers and is regarded as an outstanding expert and promoter of young vocal talent.

Liz Mohn, founder and president of NEUE STIMMEN, explains: "Alexander Neef combines management skills with high artistic standards and a clear vision for the opera of the future. His expertise and commitment to young talent make him an ideal partner and mentor for NEUE STIMMEN. I am very pleased that I was able to recruit him as Chair of the Jury. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Dominique Meyer, who led the jury with great foresight and sensitivity for 15 years. Under his leadership, numerous young talents were discovered and supported in a lasting way. Many prize winners now pursue national or international careers."

Alexander Neef has long been closely connected to NEUE STIMMEN: already during Gérard Mortier's tenure he collaborated with the competition. As director of the Canadian Opera Company, he also actively supported young talents, such as mezzo-soprano Emily D'Angelo, who won second prize at NEUE STIMMEN in 2017 and was named "Singer of the Year" with the OPUS Klassik award 2025.

Regarding his new role, Alexander Neef says: "Being appointed Chair of the Jury is a great honor and a special responsibility. NEUE STIMMEN is one of the most important singing competitions worldwide. I look forward to working with my colleagues from the international opera scene to discover artistic excellence and genuine personalities and to support these talents in the long term."

2026 Singing Competition: Application Phase Begins

The application phase for the 21st International Singing Competition NEUE STIMMEN is now open and runs until February 1, 2026. Young singers up to the age of 30 who are pursuing a professional opera career can apply at www.neue-stimmen.de/en. In addition to the usual documents, the online application requires the submission of two opera arias in video format.

After reviewing the video applications (Round 1), an internationally composed jury will invite the best singers to the "Live Auditions" (Round 2). Between April and June 2026, the selected talents will perform directly in front of the jury in 14 major cities around the world: Amsterdam, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Frankfurt, Houston, Cape Town, London, Milan, Munich, New York, Paris, Warsaw, Vienna, and Zurich.

Final Round in Gütersloh in October 2026

Around 40 talents will qualify for the final round in Gütersloh (Round 3) taking place from October 5 to 9, 2026. There, they will perform before the renowned jury chaired by Alexander Neef and in front of an international audience of experts. Members of the jury for both the preliminary rounds and the final round include experts such as Samuel Gelber (Washington National Opera), Sophie Joyce (Opéra national de Paris), Sophie de Lint (Dutch National Opera Amsterdam), Bernd Loebe (Oper Frankfurt), Christoph Seufferle (Deutsche Oper Berlin), Michael Volle (baritone), Elisabeth Sobotka (Staatsoper Unter den Linden Berlin), and Evamaria Wieser (Salzburg Festival).

The Liz Mohn Foundation, as the organizer of the International Singing Competition, awards prizes totaling over 60,000 euros. In addition, participants benefit from the NEUE STIMMEN "Creating Careers" program, which offers long-term support through masterclasses, supplementary coaching, and concert engagements.

Additional Information

The NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition was initiated by Liz Mohn in 1987. All project components – the competition, masterclasses, concerts, and coaching sessions – are brought together under the umbrella of NEUE STIMMEN "Creating Careers". The goal of both existing and new support measures is not only to discover talent, but also to mentor and guide young artists over the long term. In this way, the Liz Mohn Foundation offers young vocal talents opportunities for development in a globalized and rapidly changing opera world. NEUE STIMMEN has already supported many renowned singers at an early stage on their path to an international career, including Christiane Karg, Nathalie Stutzmann, Marina Rebeka, Michael Volle, René Pape, Franco Fagioli, Nadine Sierra, Nicole Car, Pene Pati and Elsa Dreisig.

Further Information and Images

This press release, a current biography of the new Jury Chair Alexander Neef, as well as image material can be found on www.liz-mohn-stiftung.de/en/our-news. Please filter by "NEUE STIMMEN Competition".

Photo Subs:

- 1. The prize winners of the NEUE STIMMEN 2024 International Singing Competition (photo: Besim Mazhiqui)
- 2. Alexander Neef, Director of the Opéra national de Paris, is the new Chair of the Jury of the NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition (Photo: Elena Bauer)
- 3. Liz Mohn, Founder and President of NEUE STIMMEN (Photo: Jan Voth)

All information about the competition can be found on www.neue-stimmen.de/en.

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The Liz Mohn Foundation is an independent foundation governed by private law within the meaning of Section 1 of the Foundation Act for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia with its registered office in Gütersloh.

The respective supervisory authority is the district government of Detmold.

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About the Liz Mohn Stiftung:

The Liz Mohn Foundation has four areas of activity: International Relations, Creating Leadership Cultures, Power of Culture and Global Talents. A particular concern of Liz Mohn and the foundation is to build bridges of communication across languages and borders and in this way bringing people from different nations and cultures, with different professions and positions and from different generations into dialog. **More information:** www.liz-mohn-stiftung.de/en