

PRESS RELEASE

Over 1.100 opera talents from 69 nations apply for NEUE STIMMEN 2026

Following the initial digital pre-selection based on video applications, the second round of NEUE STIMMEN 2026 has now begun. Participants will present themselves in person to the jury at international live auditions in twelve cities. Afterward, the jury will decide who qualifies for the competition's final round, which will take place from October 5 to 9 in Gütersloh.

Gütersloh, April 13, 2026. Interest in the Liz Mohn Foundation's NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition remains as high as ever in its 21st edition: A total of 1,126 emerging singers from 69 countries have registered for the competition. Following an initial digital pre-selection based on video submissions, 467 talented singers have been invited to the second round, the so-called Live Auditions. In these auditions, the selected singers will personally present themselves to the jury in twelve international music metropolises until 10 June 2026. The series kicks off in Amsterdam and concludes in Berlin. In addition to established locations, Houston, in Texas, USA, is a new addition to the list of selection venues this year.

"The high number of applications and the international diversity underscore the global significance and appeal of NEUE STIMMEN. I am very much looking forward to meeting exceptional talents from all over the world again this year and accompanying them on their journey," says Liz Mohn, founder of the Liz Mohn Foundation and initiator of NEUE STIMMEN.

Continuity and new momentum in the work of the international jury

The 2026 Live Auditions will be led by four jury members who will oversee all three rounds of the competition: Evamaria Wieser (Casting Director of the Salzburg Festival), Sophie Joyce (Casting Director of the Opéra national de Paris), Samuel Gelber (Director of Artistic Planning at the Washington National Opera), and Christoph Seufferle (Opera Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin). They were already responsible for reviewing the video applications in the digital preliminary round and also ensure continuity and the highest professional standards in the selection process during the final round in October.

During the preliminary auditions, they will be joined by additional jury members: Bernd Loebe (General Director of the Frankfurt Opera) and Xenia Hofmann (Artistic Director of the Zurich Opera House) will support the jury on site. Together, they will select approximately 40 talents who will qualify for the final round.

In addition, the competition specifically invites international experts from the opera industry to attend the Live Auditions as observers. For the participating singers, this means additional visibility as well as the opportunity to establish valuable contacts early on and to expand their professional network in the long term.

Final in Gütersloh under the chairmanship of Alexander Neef

The competition's final round will take place in Gütersloh from October 5 to 9, 2026. This year, for the first time, Alexander Neef, Director of the Opéra national de Paris, will chair the jury. With him the jury gains an internationally renowned and influential figure who has known and supported the competition for many years. Alexander Neef brings a clear artistic vision and, together with Liz Mohn, founder of NEUE STIMMEN, is dedicated to further strengthening the long-term support of young talents – especially at a time of profound changes in the opera and cultural landscape.

The jury for the 2026 final round includes three opera experts from the younger generation: Samuel Gelber, Xenia Hofmann, and Boris Ignatov (Casting Director of the Stuttgart State Opera). Together with long-standing figures such as Bernd Loebe, Evamaria Wieser, Elisabeth Sobotka (General Director of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin), and Sophie de Lint (Director of the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam), the panel represents a diverse, internationally connected, and future-oriented perspective on the nurturing of young opera talent.

A stepping stone for young opera talents

Experience has shown that participating in NEUE STIMMEN opens up far-reaching career prospects for singers: numerous former finalists and prize winners have established themselves on national and international stages in the years following the competition. The combination of competition, networking, and long-term support makes NEUE STIMMEN one of the most important platforms for emerging opera talent worldwide.

Additional information

The NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition was initiated by Liz Mohn in 1987. With NEUE STIMMEN, the Liz Mohn Foundation searches for and promotes the best young opera singers worldwide. All project components – competition, masterclass, concerts, seminars and coachings – operate under the term NEUE STIMMEN “Creating Careers”. The aim of existing and new support measures is not only to discover talent, but also to provide them with long-term support and advice. In this way, the Liz Mohn Foundation opens up development opportunities for young singing talents in a globalized and rapidly changing opera world. NEUE STIMMEN has already supported many renowned singers at a young age on their way to an international career, including Michael Volle, Nathalie Stutzmann, Marina Rebeka, René Pape, Christiane Karg, Franco Fagioli, Nadine Sierra, Nicole Car, Pene Pati and Elsa Dreisig.

Additional information and photo material

This press release, a current biography of the new chairman of the jury Alexander Neef, and images can be found on www.liz-mohn-stiftung.de/en/our-news. Please filter for “NEUE STIMMEN Competition”.

Photo Subs:

- 1. [Mezzo Soprano Anita Monserrat, the later second prize winner, at the auditions for the NEUE STIMMEN 2024 International Singing Competition](#) (Foto: Besim Mazhiqi)
- 2. [Alexander Neef, Director of the Opéra national de Paris, is the new Chairman 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