



An adventure for talented singers: The 4th International Opera Workshop Waiblingen

Since 2019, talented singers from all over the world have been gathering at the International Opera Workshop in Waiblingen to polish their musical craft with operatic stars **Melanie Diener** and **Thomas Hampson**.

The **4th International Opera Workshop Waiblingen 2023** will take place between **November 19th and 25th**. This year's workshop received a record number of 150 applications, including 90 from sopranos. From these, **twelve singers** from ten nations have now been selected to work publicly with Melanie Diener and Thomas Hampson for six days, before performing with them at the final concert alongside the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen conducted by Vlad Iftinca.



“Every Year, our gathering for the ‘Waiblingen Opernwerkstatt’ is an adventure” – and not just for the participants, but also for the American star singer Thomas Hampson: ambitious Opera singers that we choose to mentor for the week are a joy and a challenge. The privilege of trust they invest in their tutoring, yoga classes, and singing in all sorts of venues in the city is a thrill.”

That's why Hampson, as an opera lover and committed mentor of young talent, didn't take long to accept when the internationally celebrated soprano **Melanie Diener** from Waiblingen asked him to co-found the

International Opera Workshop Waiblingen together with her and the city of Waiblingen in 2019. They did so to great success, as Hampson describes: “Waiblingen has a devoted musical public and the support from the city is remarkable. We work hard, we sing a lot, and the city rings.”

The **12 singers** selected for the International Opera Workshop Waiblingen 2023 are:

1. Céline Akçag, Mezzo-Soprano (Switzerland)
2. Josua Bernbeck, Baritone (Germany)
3. Joonyeop Kim, Baritone (South Korea)
4. Chelsea Kolić, Soprano (Canada)
5. Evgenya Kühme, Soprano (Germany)
6. Cheng Li, Tenor (China)
7. Luis Magallanes, Tenor (Venezuela)
8. Sanele Mwelase, Countertenor (South Africa)
9. Halidou Nombre, Baritone (France)
10. Marija Salečić, Soprano (Croatia)
11. Annemarie Vergoossenm, Mezzosoprano/Alto (Netherlands)
12. Xiaofang Zhao, Soprano (China)

The opera workshop scholarships are widely advertised. The workshop is aimed at young talents who are currently transitioning from study to work. Selection criteria include musical excellence demonstrated through work samples, educational history, and references from well-known artists or mentors. The course participants stay with host families from the region and, as in previous years, also perform in small-scale recitals in public places outside of the master class. In this way, the musicians and citizens of Waiblingen also get to directly experience the workshop's ethos of musical excellence and intercultural exchange.

Melanie Diener is looking forward to it enormously: "There is magic in every beginning, and this is the fourth time! Again, I'm curious, excited, full of emotions and hopes for whatever may come – like at our very first opera workshop in September 2019."

This year's opera workshop will once again focus on works by Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** and other composers such as Johann **Strauss**. Together with the opera stars, the young singers reinterpret these arias and ensembles from Mozart's operas. The master classes and the crowning **closing concert** with Melanie Diener, Thomas Hampson and all scholarship holders will take place on **November 25th 2023** in the Ghibelline Hall of the Waiblingen Community Center. The artists are accompanied by the **Württemberg Philharmonic Reutlingen**, which was awarded the "Innovative Orchestra 2019" prize for its nationwide unique interactive live streaming format NETZ-WERK-ORCHESTER, under the direction of the internationally renowned conductor, principal répétiteur of the Stuttgart State Opera and Head Coach of the Stuttgart International Opera Studio: **Vlad Iftinca**.

For the first time this year, the International Opera Workshop Waiblingen was recognized as a "**Green Event Baden-Württemberg**". This Baden-Württemberg sustainability strategy recognizes events that meet the specified sustainability criteria and carry out their project accordingly.

For **Thomas Vuk, Head of the Culture and Sport Department**, urban and regional integration is extremely important: "It's particularly important to me to use the project to reach children and young people and to get them excited about opera - so the schools are invited to visit the workshop again this year. Plus, connecting the city's cultural institutions with each other is of great importance to me, which is why I'm looking forward to the guest appearance of the young talents at the **Galerie Stihl Waiblingen on November 23rd** in collaboration with the Integration Council of the City of Waiblingen."

The collaboration with the global opera network "Opera for Peace" will also continue as it has done successfully in past years.

The public rehearsals (on November 21st/22nd) will be live-streamed and so Melanie Diener invites, not only the Waiblingen audience, but also audiences nationwide: "Dive with us into a world of great emotion. Let yourself be charmed and enchanted by these young artists. Enjoy the ride. Music and singing in many languages – from Waiblingen to the world!"

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