



Gala with international celebrities: European cultural prizes awarded at the Bonn Opera on the occasion of the Beethoven anniversary

Press release from the 31st of August 2021

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Great atmosphere in the auditorium, happy faces among the award winners, finally live culture in front of an appreciative audience again: The big gala for the award ceremony of the European Culture Awards 2021 in the Bonn Opera House only had winners last night. Under the patronage of North Rhine-Westphalian Prime Minister Armin Laschet - and in the presence of the main sponsor and presenting partner Klemens Hallmann, owner of Vienna-based HALLMANN HOLDING - ten European Cultural Prizes and the "Next Generation" European Promotional Prize were awarded. The gala was dedicated to Ludwig van Beethoven, whose 250th birthday will continue to be celebrated into this year. At one of the first events with an audience, a particularly large number of stars from the international music and art scene gathered on the red carpet and on the opera stage.

The Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, which has just been named a UN Climate Ambassador, served as the house orchestra and at the same time as one of the award winners for music, under the direction of its general music director Dirk Kaftan. It was honored, among other things, for its participatory concepts and its claim to set out for new musical shores with the audience and its namesake Beethoven. Laudator Timotheus Höttges, Chairman of the Board of Management of Deutsche Telekom AG, praised the orchestra's joy in experimenting with new forms of music communication. "Beethoven already admonished us that art can only ever be measured by art and not by commerce. In the truest sense of the word, we must have something left over for them."

Music awards in diverse genres

In specially created arrangements, Katie Melua, the Scorpions and Till Brönner performed together with the orchestra - also as prize winners. What does not seem quite unusual for the star trumpeter, was for the songwriter and the band around Klaus Meine with 50 years of stage experience then nevertheless an interesting new experience, to which all together had particularly looked forward.

Katie Melua was honored for her extremely versatile and holistic musical personality, which helps "to overcome the division in Europe," said laudator and fellow musician Leslie Mandoki. Laudator Katarina Witt emphasized Till Brönner's versatility and his strong-voiced commitment to the fate of his artistic colleagues in times of the pandemic. The Scorpions received the European Culture Prize in recognition of their life's work spanning more than five decades. Laudator Heinz Rudolf Kunze attested that the band had "earned its popularity with indomitable will, perseverance and diligence.

Also honored with the European Cultural Award for Music were the star performer David Garrett, who inspires new audiences for classical music with his crossover programs, and the unique soprano Diana Damrau, who recommended herself on all international stages with her parade role as the Queen of the Night. "I am very proud to be here because Europe should be a model like an orchestra: composed of the most diverse states and ways of thinking, but cooperative with a common goal," Damrau said. "We have to make our European orchestra a global orchestra!"

Cultural awards also for drama and visual arts

The European Cultural Forum also regularly honors other artists outside the music scene who hold a special position in their genres. This year, for example, exceptional actor Tobias Moretti was honored, who has enjoyed particular success with his character portrayals both on the theater stage and in front of the camera. ARD program director Christine Strobl not only highlighted the great merits of the actor and border crosser between genres, but above all praised Moretti as a political figure who interferes and can also be uncomfortable. "Art and artists must be free," said Strobl. The honoree was particularly pleased with the European aspirations of the prize, because "I wish that Europe continues to be perceived as a synonym for diversity and is no longer just the synonym for the lowest common denominator."

The European Culture Prize for Visual Arts was awarded to the Austrian Gottfried Helnwein, who fills much-visited, sometimes uncomfortable exhibitions all over the world. He promised the audience that "despite the prize, he will continue not to follow any rules and will remain committed only to people". Laudator Klaus Albrecht Schröder of Vienna's Albertina attested that his works "make often suppressed creatures visible and thus move us deeply."

Special categories for special achievements

Since 2018, a special category at the European Culture Award has been the promotion of sustainable technologies and concepts. In Bonn, Formula E driver Nico Rosberg was honored for his environmental commitment as co-founder of the Greentech Festival and investor in green technologies. He has also long called for the conversion of racing operations to electric vehicles.

For some time now, another special category has been "Fair Fashion" as a combination of creative power and sustainable production. The Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation Gerd Müller honored model Barbara Meier as this year's award winner for her commitment to minimum ecological and social standards in the production of clothing in Africa and Asia. The studied Ma-thematikerin is also as Ambassador of the Federal Ministry on the way and was pleased about the large stage for their message: Fashion is actually something very beautiful, but also a very dirty industry, both which concerns the garbage and the slavery of the textile workers." Meier therefore promoted the purchase of fairly produced fashion.

European "Next Generation" Award for the Digital Classroom

Innovation, entrepreneurial spirit and daring to try something new - that was the focus of this year's "Next Generation" European Promotional Award competition. In view of the challenges surrounding pandemic distance learning, the best start-ups and project initiatives for the digital classroom 4.0 were sought. Among a total of 21 applications from all over Europe, the Finnish company "Curious Technologies" from Helsinki was awarded with its speech robot Elias in the Bonn Opera House. The startup headed by CEO Johanna Hemminki developed an interactive learning program that allows students to learn languages in a playful way by holding conversations with human-like robots. Thanks to the "learning by talking" concept, the software is not only suitable for schoolchildren, but can also be used in adult education, preschool or for illiterate learners.

New paths: The digitized culture

The last few months have shown that new paths must be taken in times of crisis. If culture is not to be forgotten, it must come home to the people. With a great deal of enthusiasm and creativity, Deutsche Telekom, together with the Beethovenjubiläumsgesellschaft and the Beethoven Orchestra, has already moved numerous formats online and broadcast them on its new free TV channel "#dabeiTV".

Deutsche Telekom was also a reliable media partner to the European Cultural Forum this year. "We have been supporting cultural projects for many years. The pandemic was an impetus to question old formats and rituals, to rethink them. And thus make them accessible to even more people, namely via our networks," said Timotheus Höttges, CEO of Deutsche Telekom AG. "Beethoven stands for European understanding like no other. That's why we were very happy to stream the European Culture Award and live up to our claim to reflect our broad concept of culture."

Culture as common ground

Particularly in times of crisis in Germany's unique cultural landscape, partners become increasingly important. It is therefore particularly gratifying that, despite the pandemic, Vienna-based HALLMANN HOLDING, the main sponsor and presenting partner, has remained loyal to the European Cultural Award for the second year. "Ludwig van Beethoven described art as a means of uniting the world. Culture binds, creates identity and gives strength, even in difficult times," says entrepreneur and investor Klemens Hallmann. "On this common ground, a society can continue to develop with a promising future and a joy of life. That's why it's a particular pleasure for me to present the European Culture Award in Bonn and, as the main partner, to make a contribution to the preservation and further development of the European cultural landscape."

Cultural Award with the support of the Beethoven Jubilee Society.

"It is as if every tree spoke to me," Beethoven raved during his stays in the countryside. At a time when environmental and climate issues are more topical than ever, the Beethoven Jubiläums GmbH is also taking a new look at the relationship between people and nature. Malte Boecker, Artistic Director: "The motto of the anniversary is: Rediscover Beethoven! The awarding of the European Cultural Prizes in Bonn fits this in a special way. It draws attention not only to personalities,

but also to initiatives that promote sustainability in society and are inspired by Beethoven.

About the European Culture Award

For many years, the European Cultural Awards have been one of the most highly regarded cultural highlights. Every year, the gala is held in major European cultural venues such as the Frauenkirche in Dresden, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the Vienna State Opera. It is an important platform for the encounter between art, business, and politics. The European Culture Award honors personalities, initiatives, artists, politicians and institutions for outstanding services and achievements for Europe and its people.

About the Beethoven Jubilee GmbH

The Beethoven Jubilee honors Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday. The non-profit Beethoven Jubiläums GmbH, founded as a subsidiary of the Beethoven-Haus Foundation, is coordinating a Germany-wide program until the end of September with the support of the German government, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the city of Bonn and the Rhein-Sieg district, under the patronage of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The diverse program can be found at www.bthvn2020.de.

For more information on the European Culture Award, please visit www.europaeischer-kulturpreis.de. If you have any questions, please contact Annett Reeder: phone. +49 351 33 22 37 34 or by mail: annett.reeder@europaeischer-kulturpreis.de

We thank our main partner and presenter HALLMANN HOLDING for supporting the cultural dialogue in Europe.



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