



Awards Ceremony: Ernst von Siemens Music prize goes to Christoph Eschenbach

The Composers' Prizes go to the young composers Mark Barden, Birke J. Bertelsmeier and Christian Mason | The Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation once again disburses 3 million Euros in prizes and grants.

On May 31st the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation will bestow the international Ernst von Siemens music prize upon the conductor Christoph Eschenbach. Michael Krüger, Chairman of the advisory board and president of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, will present this 250,000 Euro award at a festive musical event in the Herkulesaal of the Munich Residenz. The Bamberger Symphoniker will perform under the baton of Christoph Eschenbach.

„Prizes are the icing on the cake for any creative spirit“, but the Ernst von Siemens music prize has „a very particular value and I am proud to receive this honor“, the conductor Christoph Eschenbach said in a statement prior to this year's Ernst von Siemens music prize ceremony. The foundation's curators recognize in Christoph Eschenbach an exceptional artistic figure, one whose ability to spellbind orchestras, soloists, and audiences extends far beyond the conductor's podium. He is a highly energetic conductor and an impressive trainer of orchestras, and his greatness comes from a kind of authoritative ease, which eschews all gestures of power or exaggeration, all demonstrativeness. Christoph Eschenbach demonstrates this quality not just as a conductor but also as a pianist and a pedagogue.

Born in Breslau in 1940, Christoph Eschenbach not only placed his life in the service of music; rather, at first it was music that saved his life: Eschenbach's mother died in childbirth, and he lost his father only a few years later in a penal battalion on the war front. After the war the child fell ill with typhus in an orphanage in Mecklenburg. Getting adopted by Wallydore Eschenbach, a cousin of his biological mother, Eschenbach characterized as his „salvation“. The singer and pianist gives the child, whom illness and suffering had robbed of the ability to speak, more than just language back when she asks him if he'd also like to make music and he, after a year of silence, responds with „yes“. Music gave „his diminishing life a new meaning,“ according to Christoph Eschenbach's own assessment of this crucial experience. „I am therefore thankful to stand entirely in music's service.“

In the 1950's Eschenbach partakes of piano lessons, and after graduation also takes up studies in conducting. In 1962 he wins the ARD music competition in Munich. Shortly thereafter further prizes and numerous recordings take place. In 1967 he comes under the tutelage of George Szell. In 1982 he becomes chief conductor and artistic director of Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra, and as of 1988 he directs the Houston Symphony. In the 1990's he becomes musical director of the Ravinia Festival and artistic director of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Time and again, the great breadth of Christoph Eschenbach's repertoire is in evidence. He approaches the German Romantics with the same curiosity as contemporary music, whose cause he has furthered often, both as a conductor and as a pianist.

Up to the present day he is a highly prized guest conductor for the great orchestras and opera houses of the world. Since September, 2010, he holds the dual directorship of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington D.C.

Along with appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra in the U.S., he counts opportunities with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Staatskapelle Dresden, and the Deutsche Symphonie-Orchesters in Berlin among the highlights of the current season. He toured Europe with the Vienna Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra and is – in this as in every year since 1999 – a guest of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Over a 50-year career, Christoph Eschenbach has offered to the world countless recordings, from each one of which shines forth the interpreter's hunger and curiosity for the new. Most recently, critics and audiences enthusiastically embraced performances of Schubert's *Winterreise* with baritone Matthias Goerne and Eschenbach at the piano. At the start of 2014 his Hindemith interpretations were acknowledged with a Grammy.

The support that Eschenbach received multiple times on his creative journey from those two larger-than-life personalities, George Szell and Herbert von Karajan, count among the key experiences that determine his life to the present day: Christoph Eschenbach never tires of cultivating and challenging the next generation of artists. Szell and Karajan „have showed me the journey that others must take“. In keeping with this dictum Eschenbach has already announced his intent to make large portions of the prize money available to „young artists and their career ambitions.“ He also passes along his extensive artistic experience in masterclasses and orchestral academies such as that of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Kronberg Academy, or the Manhattan School of Music.

Christoph Eschenbach is a Knight of the Légion d'Honneur, an officer of the French Ordre National du Mérite, Commandeur des Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, recipient of the German National Medal of Service, and winner of the Leonard Bernstein Prize.

When he is not on tour, Eschenbach shares his time between the US and Paris; for if there is one thing he avoids, in life as in his work, it is routine.

Prize Ceremony on May 31st, 2015 | 7 pm in the Herkulesaal in Munich

The Ernst von Siemens Music Prize will be awarded to Christoph Eschenbach on May 31st, 2015 in the Herkulesaal at the Munich Residenz, during a festive musical event. Michael Krüger, president of the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, will bestow this high honor. The Bamberger Symphoniker, with whom Christoph Eschenbach has been allied for 50 years, will perform under his direction Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* (1943) as well as one work each by the composition prize recipients.

The three composers' prizes for promising young composers will in the year 2015 go to the Berlin-based American composer Mark Barden, Birke J. Bertelsmeier of Germany, and Christian Mason from the UK. The Bamberger Symphoniker will interpret the orchestra version of Barden's *Monoliths I – III* (2014/2015) as well as Bertelsmeier's *Zimzum* (2015). They will also perform Mason's orchestral work *Clear Night* from 2007/2008. The composer support awards include prizes of 35,000 Euros. The young artists will also have the opportunity to produce a portrait CD on the Viennese label *col legno* to their own specifications. The album will appear in Fall, 2015.

Thanks to a cooperation between the EvS Music Foundation and Bavarian Radio, the entire prize ceremony can be viewed live around the world at www.evs-musikstiftung.ch and on www.br-klassik.de.

The Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation once again disburses 3 million Euros.

The Foundation will once again award three million Euros in prizes and grants. Around 130 projects in the area of contemporary music will obtain support – from Russia to Florida, from Iceland to Israel. The lion's share of the funds will go to composition commissions, but also festivals, concerts, projects for children and youth, as well as publications will receive support. The next due date for applications is September 15, 2015.

Please Note:

The Ernst von Siemens Music Prize (EvS Music Prize) has been awarded every year since 1973 by the privately-run Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation (EvS Music Foundation), which is located in Switzerland. This is not a prize of Siemens, Ltd., nor the closely associated Siemens Foundation. We therefore urgently request that you consistently print the name of the foundation and of the prize accurately.

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