

MORTIER AWARD 17

Award Ceremony at the RING AWARD 2017 Finals

**Press Meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 2017, 11 am,
Schauspielhaus Graz**

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Intendant:

Heinz Weyringer

1. The MORTIER AWARD

In 2014, Heinz Weyringer, director of the RING AWARD competition (Graz), and Albrecht Thiemann, editor of the international opera magazine OPERNWELT (Berlin) initiated a new award for music theatre – the MORTIER AWARD. It is named after the late Gerard Mortier, Belgian opera and festival director, who was the first laureate.

The MORTIER AWARD honours personalities who are devoted in an exemplary way to a form of music theatre that is in touch with our times. A type of music theatre “that reflects and discusses the history of the genre, spanning more than four centuries, as a source of existential experience. A music theatre that imagines a future. A music theatre that plays an active role in public discourse and civil society, addressing urgent issues for local communities and society in general. The MORTIER AWARD does not promote a particular type of aesthetics, artistic practice or professional group. It encourages innovation and a risk-taking attitude to make the impossible possible. It is underpinned by an intellectual ethos that focuses on key questions of the human condition: Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? And, above all: Why are we doing what we do? In this sense the MORTIER AWARD calls for a permanent renewal of opera – its aesthetics, artistic practice and institutional structures – as well as the idea that opera should regain an ear- and eye-opening, up-to-date relevance which was, to a large extent, lost in the twentieth century. The MORTIER AWARD reminds us of the necessity of artistic innovation and taking risks.”

The MORTIER AWARD will be presented every two years. As a new addition, it now also features a YOUNG ARTIST AWARD.

Musical theatre in touch with our times is dynamic, on the move by definition – and so will be the mental profile of the MORTIER AWARD and the YOUNG ARTIST AWARD – always open to fresh ideas and visions.

The second recipient of the MORTIER AWARD will be presented at the opening of the RING AWARD 2017 finals on June 24, 2017, 10 am, at Schauspielhaus Graz.

A special MORTIER AWARD press meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 20, 2017, 11 am, at Schauspielhaus Graz.

You are kindly requested to register at presse.ringaward@gmail.com.

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2. Excerpts from the MORTIER AWARD Statutes

The MORTIER AWARD honours personalities who are devoted in an exemplary way to a form of music theatre that is in touch with our times.

In addition to the MORTIER AWARD, a new YOUNG ARTIST AWARD is to be presented every two years to an emerging artist. The YOUNG ARTIST AWARD involves a scholarship financed by donors and sponsors. It is aimed at newcomers who, following Gerard Mortier's example, are devoted to historically informed innovations in opera.

4. Markus Hinterhäuser

MARKUS HINTERHÄUSER, pianist and artistic director of the Salzburg Festival, is the second recipient of the MORTIER AWARD for music theatre. The Award, a bronze sculpture of Sisyphus, created by Berlin artist Alexander Polzin, will be presented to him at Graz Schauspielhaus on June 24, 2017. The American stage director PETER SELLARS will give the laudatory speech.

Markus Hinterhäuser won acclaim not only as a distinguished explorer of modern piano works and sensitive accompanist of lied singers but also as an innovative initiator and curator of highly successful music programmes. Encouraged by Gerard Mortier, then Artistic Director of the Salzburg Festival, he organized (along with Thomas Zierhofer-Kin) the "Zeitfluss" concert series (1993-2000). Starting in 2007 he curated the complete concert programmes, in 2011 he was interim Artistic Director of the Salzburg Festival. Following a three-year-intermezzo as Artistic Director of the Wiener Festwochen, he is now Intendant of the Salzburg Summer Festival.

Markus Hinterhäuser is an artist impresario who, with his intellectual intuition, manages time and again to explore uncharted terrain for the eye and the ear. Like Gerard Mortier, his first mentor, he is a sharp-minded dreamer who believes firmly in the humanistic power of the arts. Relaxed curiosity, smiling enthusiasm, uncompromised competence, open dialogue – with these features he has been winning over artists and audience alike.

5. The MORTIER AWARD 2014

The first MORTIER AWARD ceremony took place on May 31, 2014, at the finals of the RING AWARD competition 2014. Michael Haneke, Austrian film director and Oscar winner, gave the laudatory speech in memory of the late Gerard Mortier. French conductor Sylvain Cambreling, Mortier's longtime partner, accepted the Award in his place. He received a bronze sculpture, created for the MORTIER AWARD by Berlin based artist and stage designer Alexander Polzin, who worked with Gerard Mortier on various projects.

“The Award calls for a permanent renewal of opera – its aesthetics, artistic practice and institutional structures. It is also an appeal to experiment with new forms of producing and presenting opera.”

“We will do our best to preserve and refresh the memory and artistic legacy of a great visionary with an inspiring leitmotif: tradition means innovation.”

Albrecht Thiemann

“The impact of Gerard Mortier originated in his integrity and the identity of program and person. He endeavored, along with like-minded people of all backgrounds, to create a theatre of human compassion, enlightened and alert.”

Michael Haneke

6. OPERNWELT

OPERNWELT, the leading German language magazine on opera and music theatre, was founded in 1960.

OPERNWELT offers detailed reviews and reports from around the international opera scene, interviews with artists and personalities working back stage (artistic directors, talent scouts etc.), essays and commentaries on social, political and institutional aspects of opera, reviews of new CDs, DVDs and Streams, up to date schedules and the latest news from classical music circuits around the world.

Once a year (in the fall), OPERNWELT conducts a poll among 50 music critics from Europe and the United States about the previous season. Based on these votes OPERNWELT publishes a Best-of-List that includes 15 categories – from “Company of the Year” and “Singer of the Year” to “Production of the Year”, from “Stage Director of the Year” and “Conductor of the Year” to “Young Artist of the Year” (to name just a few awards). A full documentation of the poll is presented the annual OPERNWELT-“Jahrbuch”, published in early October, along with detailed articles, interviews and analyses.

OPERNWELT is available in print, as E-paper and App.

<https://www.der-theaterverlag.de/opernwelt>

7. The RING AWARD

The RING AWARD in Graz is a unique international musical theatre competition for stage direction and stage design. Its aim is to give young and not yet established directors and designers a professional platform for working in step with actual stage practise. As a unique institution of its kind worldwide, the RING AWARD sets itself the task of reflecting current developments in stage design for the musical theatre. It has turned out to be a successful stepping stone for upcoming artists and offers them the chance of finding international resonance with their innovative approaches to the musical theatre.

The RING AWARD was created in 1997 on the initiative of WAGNER FORUM GRAZ and is organised in collaboration with Schauspielhaus Graz and cooperating with the Department of Stage Design at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz.

In contrast to other related competitions, its focus is on stage direction and stage design, which are developed and implemented in teams. The RING AWARD takes place every three years in Graz and has a strong international perspective thanks to the participation of artists and renowned jury members from all over the world.

The RING AWARD is held in three phases. It is the unique aspect of this competition that it does not only evaluate designs and concepts, but leads to actually realised stage productions to be judged by the juries.

In the first phase, the prestigious RING AWARD Jury examines all submitted concepts and selects about ten teams for the semifinals, at which their staging concepts are presented to the jury and the public. In addition, the directors need to do "sample rehearsing" in front of the jury, and the designers' set concepts are examined by experts as to their feasibility. Three teams get further into the finals, where they produce a part of the competition work on the stage of Schauspielhaus Graz. The prizes are awarded by the RING AWARD Jury and a Theatre Jury. The singers supporting the teams are provided by Oper Graz, University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, and several Richard Wagner associations and music schools.

In 2017, the RING AWARD can look back with pride upon twenty years of its existence and is now running the competition for the eighth time, this time with "Don Pasquale" by Gaetano Donizetti as its competition opera. The works used in the competition before are Richard Wagner's "Rheingold" (Rhine maidens scene) and "Parsifal" (sequences from the second act), Jacques Offenbach's "Les contes d'Hoffmann" (Antonia act), W. A. Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro" (second act), Giuseppe Verdi's "Rigoletto" (final act), Johann Strauss' operetta "Die Fledermaus" (first act), and Carl Maria von Weber's "Der Freischütz" (second act). The proud record: since 1997 already more than 1200 young artists from 49 countries have participated in the RING AWARD competition.

8. The RING AWARD Final 2017

In the grand finale at Schauspielhaus Graz, three young production teams develop their concepts for the first act of the opera "Don Pasquale" by Gaetano Donizetti.

Each team is allocated a team of singers. As the focus of the competition is on the stage realisation of the work, the musical accompaniment is by piano.

The teams rehearse with the singers from mid- to end of June, having previously supervised the realisation of their stage concepts in the workshops of Theaterservice GmbH Graz.

The end results will be presented to the public on July 24 and 25 at Schauspielhaus Graz.

Two juries, the RING AWARD Jury and the Theatre Jury, decide on the awards.

All items on the programme below are open to the public. Entry is free, voluntary donations are very welcome.

Combined tickets for the finals are available in the foyer of the Schauspielhaus on Saturday June 24 from 09:30 a.m.

Final-Teams 2017

Team A: **Sergei Morozov (RUS) / Aleksandra Alekseeva (RUS)**

Team B: **Barbora Horáková Joly (CZ) / Cornelia Schmidt (D)**

Team C: **Valentin Schwarz (A) / Andrea Cozzi (I)**

For more information please consult

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