

Gütersloh, 20/04/2011

**NEUE STIMMEN 2011: 1,422 applications from around the globe
Preliminary auditions to begin in Toronto**

A total of 1,422 up-and-coming opera singers have applied to compete in the 14th NEUE STIMMEN International Singing Competition, organized by the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The preliminary round auditions, held in cities all around the globe, will begin on April 29 in Toronto, followed by auditions in Vienna, New York, Chicago and Yokosuka, Japan. In total, candidates can audition at 23 locations worldwide.

Preliminary auditions in Germany will be held in Berlin (June 7-8), Düsseldorf (June 9-10) and Munich (June 12-13). More than one-third of the contestants are from Asia, with 201 applying from China alone, and 169 from South Korea. A total of 141 singers from Germany are participating, with 112 from the United States, 116 from Russia and 103 from Central and South America. Contestants from Australia, New Zealand and Africa will also be taking part.

Brian Dickie, general director of the Chicago Opera Theater and member of the NEUE STIMMEN jury, will be directing the preliminary round events, attending all auditions in order to ensure the judging process maintains a consistent level of quality. In addition, he will be using his Internet blog to report on what he sees and hears. The preliminary round auditions will conclude by the end of August.

The judging process will give equal weight to technical ability, musical presentation and vocal quality, as well as artistic personality and stage presence. The final round will take place from October 16 to 22 in Gütersloh, with Dominique Meyer, director of the Vienna State Opera, serving as jury chairman. Approximately 40 contestants will be selected during the preliminary round to participate in the finals. The first-place winner will take home a cash prize of €15,000.

Joining Dominique Meyer and Brian Dickie as members of the jury are: Gustav Kuhn, conductor and director of the Tyrolean Festival Erl; Francisco Araíza, Kammersänger and professor at the College of Music and Performing Arts Stuttgart; Siegfried Jerusalem, Kammersänger and professor at the College of Music Nuremberg; Jürgen Kesting, music critic and author; Bernd Loebe, general director of the Frankfurt Opera; Nicholas Payne, director of Opera Europa, the association of European opera houses and festivals; Anja Silja, Kammersängerin; and Evamaria Wieser, artistic director of the Salzburg Festival.

The NEUE STIMMEN competitions have already helped numerous young singers launch their careers, including Vesselina Kasarova, René Pape, Nathalie Stutzmann, Noëmi Nadelmann, Roman Trekel, Hanno Müller-Brachmann, Melanie Diener, Dietrich Henschel, Michael Volle, Angelika Kirchschrager, Anna Samuil, Maxim Mironov, Marina Rebeka, Julia Novikova and soprano Christiane Karg, who will be appearing at this year's Salzburg Festival as Zerlina in Mozart's "Don Giovanni."