

Prologue

The semifinal and final rounds will each start with a prologue. This is an opportunity for diving even deeper into the topics of the different competition rounds. The accompanying program makes the music accessible, offers room for reflection, and encourages conversations.

Admission free.

Thursday, October 18, 6:00 p.m.

Prologue I:

The commission. The work.

HMTMH – Richard Jakoby Saal

With: Lucas Vis (moderator) – Thorsten Encke – Rebecca Saunders

Monday, October 22, 6:30 p.m.

Prologue II:

Chamber Music!

HMTMH – Richard Jakoby Saal

With: Raliza Nikolov (moderator) – Jana Kuss – Oliver Wille

Thursday, October 25, 6:00 p.m.

Prologue III:

The Critics' Quartet

NDR – Kleiner Sendesaal

With: Rainer Wagner (moderator) – Susanne Benda – Sabine Fallenstein – Volker Hagedorn

Prologue I: The commission. The work.

Thu, October 18, 6:00 p.m.
HMTMH – Richard Jakoby Saal

With: Lucas Vis (Moderator) – Thorsten Encke – Rebecca Saunders

Composing takes time, and composers carefully reflect each moment of the composition, deciding what should be sounded and – perhaps more importantly – how it is to be notated. It is not unusual for a single composition to take a whole year or even longer to be finished. Participants of the competition received the sheet music for Rebecca Saunder’s commissioned work ‘Hauch’ 13 weeks before they are to perform the piece during the semifinal round, leaving our young musicians with 91 days to prepare. You, the audience, will have between 8 and 8.5 minutes to get to know ‘Hauch’. Though we hear with our ears, we need much more to truly listen. Every composition has something to tell us, something that cannot be described with words. Individual notes are like letters in language, several notes form ‘words’, several ‘words’ make a ‘sentence’. Timber, dynamics, and phrasing are what gives music its meaning. By listening actively, we try to understand what the music is telling us.

Composing is an expedition in itself: how can a composer note down his or her ideas so that musicians will correctly interpret them? Composers are constantly discovering new modes of playing to realize their expressive aims. Listening is an expedition as well, and as with most expeditions, it is helpful to come on board somewhat prepared. During this prologue, composers and conductors Lucas Vis and Thorsten Encke explore different perspectives of ‘Hauch’ with Rebecca Saunders, who composed the work. We say that music begins where words end. Lucas Vis still attempted to capture the music with words, remarking that “‘Hauch’ is constructed out of pure silver and gold.”

Prologue II: Chamber Music!

Mon, October 22, 6:30 p.m.

HMTMH – Richard Jakoby Saal

With: Raliza Nikolov (Moderator) – Jana Kuss – Oliver Wille

What an incredible challenge! The finalists of the JJV will not only perform as soloists with orchestra, but also with the Kuss Quartet. The program will include either Ludwig van Beethoven's String Quintet Op. 4 or one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's string quintets, which, according to musicologist Charles Rosen, were the composer's greatest achievement in chamber music.

As late as 1773, music critic and composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt insisted that the string quartet was the ideal mode of musical dialogue that would be disturbed and rendered confusing by the addition of another voice. If this was indeed true, Mozart happily accepted the challenge posed by the statement – his string quintets are formidable examples of what can be achieved in terms of harmony, voice leading, and melody.

During the prologue, we will immerse ourselves in string quintets and explore how in this genre, Mozart – having finally freed himself from his great role model Haydn – merges chamber music and elements of concerto style with just a hint of opera. We would like to demonstrate that string quintets are every bit as amazing as their four-voice counterparts and will discuss the magnitude of shifts in focus and possibilities when a second viola is added. We will explore expressive depths and complex demands while trying to address the question of whether there is in fact a contradiction between solo playing and chamber music.

Jana Kuss and Oliver Wille, founding members of the Kuss Quartet, will talk to music journalist Raliza Nikolov about the prerequisites of successful chamber music making – what are the challenges and what are the differences and similarities in comparison with solo concerto performances? And most importantly, we will see how a violinist can join an existing string quartet as first chair so seamlessly that it sounds as though the ensemble has always consisted of five musicians.

Prologue III: The Critics' Quartet

Thu October 25, 6:00 p.m.
NDR – Kleiner Sendesaal

With: Rainer Wagner (Moderator) – Susanne Benda – Sabine Fallenstein – Volker Hagedorn

The name 'Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik' (German Record Critics' Award) is almost as long as the history of the award. In the early 1960s, a handful of renowned music critics sought to establish a record award in Germany, a form of quality control for the flood of new releases. A decade later, record companies tried to influence the panel's decisions. The critics voiced their dissent, left the organization, and in 1979 founded the German Record Critics' Award. Today, the non-profit organization consists of 160 music critics who not only work free of charge, but even pay a yearly contribution in order to ensure that the award remains completely unswayed by commercial interests such as record sales, bestseller lists, and demands of the music industry by being financially independent. 32 expert juries award the Quarterly Critics' Choice, Annual Awards, and Certificates of Special Merit, as well as the annual 'Nightingale', a trophy intended for exceptional artists that was especially designed by artist Daniel Richter in 2010.

From time to time, the jurors make public appearances: as the 'Critics' Quartet', they are invited to music festivals, opera houses, and concert halls, or, as now in Hanover, the Joseph Joachim Violin Competition. In talk show format, four music critics who are also jurors of the GRCA discuss a piece of music with the aid of exemplary sound recordings. The chosen piece is of relevance to the occasion – in Hanover, it will be a violin concerto with a history tied to Joseph Joachim, the musician this competition was named after. Susanne Benda, Sabine Fallenstein, Volker Hagedorn, and host Rainer Wagner will bring their favorite recordings – as well as a few daunting examples. They will compare interpretations, evaluate violinists, and argue about what and who should be considered 'the best'.