

"We have world-class voices here."

The 6th International Opera Workshop Waiblingen (September 13-20, 2025)

Since 2019, the city of **Waiblingen** has offered a special scholarship for young singing talents from all over the world, inviting them to a multi-day workshop with international stars **Melanie Diener** and **Thomas Hampson**.



The **6th International Opera Workshop Waiblingen 2025** will take place from the **13th to 20th of September**. This year, young talents were once again invited to apply for auditions, from which the final scholarship recipients were selected. Based on recommendations from the *Opera for Peace* initiative, a total of **12 singers from 8 countries** were selected to work publicly with Melanie Diener and Thomas Hampson for eight days and perform with them at the closing concert. The **Württemberg Philharmonic Orchestra Reutlingen** will return for this event, this time with its **chief conductor Ariane Matiakh**.

Waiblingen soprano **Melanie Diener**: "In a world full of unrest, fear, and polarization, we rely on what unites us: music, singing, the human voice. The International Opera Workshop Waiblingen brings young singers from all over the world together – not despite the crises, but precisely because of them. Because music knows no boundaries. It touches where words fail. It speaks of humanity – transcending origin, language, and political realities. In our workshop, music becomes a stance. Here, different voices merge into a common sound. What matters here is not origin, but expression. Not separation, but encounter. Singing is more than sound – it is an expression of soul, longing, and hope. Especially when the world is out of sync, opera shows what art is capable of: building bridges, healing wounds, and preserving humanity." The week-long gathering is also about in-depth and intensive work; learning to use one's own energy at the right time, and above all, practical stage experience – with an orchestra and in front of an audience. After two days, the progress can also be followed via livestream as well as in the concert hall.

"I'm truly grateful to be part of this opera workshop—because for me, there's no question that I have to pass on what I've learned," says star baritone **Thomas Hampson**. "Great musicians believed in me; Bernstein, for example, saw something in me. Today, it's my absolute duty to pass on this belief, these values, this trust to young artists." He adds: "We're creating a kind of island here, far removed from the daily grind, where young singers can delve deeply into their music without external pressure. This week isn't about evaluation, but about growth. It's a gift—for all of us—that they're allowed to focus solely on the essentials here: on music, on voice, on expression. And time and again, every year, I can say, we have truly world-class voices here."

The **12 singers** selected for the International Opera Workshop Waiblingen 2025 are:

1. Jasmin Etminan (Mezzosoprano/Contralto) | Germany
2. Lena Geiger (Soprano) | Germany
3. Lucy Gibbs (Mezzosoprano) | Great Britain *Lives in Belgium*
4. Chelsea Količ (Soprano) | Canada
5. Wilma Kvamme (Soprano) | Sweden *Lives in Austria*
6. Hao Li (Tenor) | China *Lives in Germany*
7. Maria Melts (Mezzosoprano) | Germany

8. Lonwabo Mose (Bass-Baritone) | South Africa
9. WenBo Shuai (Countertenor) | China
10. Taku Hayasaka (Bass-Baritone) | Japan
11. Anastasia Wanek (Soprano) | Germany
12. Stepan Zavalishin (Baritone) | Russia

First, an open call for applications for participation in the opera workshop is published. The workshop is aimed at young talents who are currently transitioning from their studies to a career. **Selection criteria** include excellence demonstrated through work samples, training, and references from renowned artists or educators. Participants will be accommodated with **host families** from the region and, as in previous years, will present their work in addition to the public masterclass sessions, as part of a small public performance. In this way, they and the Waiblingen community will experience real, artistic engagement and intercultural exchange firsthand – a core aim for the **large town of Waiblingen**. With approximately 56,000 inhabitants, it is an important business, cultural, and higher education center in the Stuttgart metropolitan region and one of the strongest economic regions in Europe, situated on the Rems River, with a picturesque old town, the idyllic Talaue landscape park, and outstanding art and cultural institutions such as the Stihl Waiblingen Gallery and the Waiblingen Community Center.

Mayor Sebastian Wolf commented on the outstanding project: "I am delighted to welcome the International Opera Workshop to Waiblingen for the sixth time this year. Under the proven leadership of Melanie Diener and Thomas Hampson, who are at home on the world's major stages. The Opera Workshop brings together twelve exceptionally talented singers from eight nations – from Canada to South Africa – in our city. The global network "Opera for Peace" is also participating again as a partner. My special thanks go to the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation and the Kreissparkasse Waiblingen, who provide substantial financial support to the Opera Workshop. I cordially invite all opera enthusiasts and our international guests to this special event."

Robert Mayr, Chairman of the Board and founder of the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation, is equally enthusiastic: "I follow the impressive careers of Melanie Diener and Thomas Hampson with great pleasure – I first saw them both many years ago at the Salzburg Festival. The fact that they pass on their knowledge to the younger generation internationally – and do so here in Waiblingen – is a great asset for the city."

Thomas Vuk, Head of Culture and Sport, adds: "It is a great pleasure for us to welcome the 12 selected singers from eight nations to Waiblingen. I am also delighted to welcome our long-standing partner, the Württemberg Philharmonic Orchestra Reutlingen, back as our resident orchestra. Under the direction of their Chief Conductor, Ariane Matiakh, they will accompany the grand finale concert on September 20th. With the late summer concert evening as part of the event series "Waiblingen erfrischt" (Waiblingen energised), our opera talents will once again be performing on the market square. Experience the world of opera up close, visit us at our public rehearsals, and be part of this unique cultural exchange!"

SCHEDULE

13.-15. September 2025

Ankunft, Kennenlernen und erste Proben (nicht öffentlich)

Arrival, getting to know each other and initial rehearsals (not public)

16./17. September 2025, 10-1pm and 2-5pm respectively | Bürgerzentrum Waiblingen, Ghibellinensaal
public rehearsals livestreamed on Youtube

18. September 2025, | Marktplatz Waiblingen, Open-Air

Stipendiatinnen und Stipendiaten der IOW 2025 singen Lieder ihrer Heimatländer im Rahmen der Veranstaltungsreihe „Waiblingen erfrischt“

IOW 2025 scholarship holders sing songs from their home countries as part of the event series “Waiblingen erfrischt” (energised Waiblingen)

20. September 2025, 8pm | Bürgerzentrum Waiblingen, Ghibellinensaal

Closing concert with excerpts from, among others:

Richard Wagner: *Das Rheingold* und *Tannhäuser*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Così fan tutte*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Idomeneo*, *The Magic Flute*, *Ascanio in Alba*

Franz Lehár: *The Merry Widow*

Charles Gounod: *Roméo et Juliette*

Johann Strauss: *Die Fledermaus*

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IOW scholarship recipients 2025

Melanie Diener *Soprano*

Thomas Hampson *Baritone*

Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen

Ariane Matiakh *Conductor*

We sing – for life, for freedom, for the dignity of every human being. Because a world in which singing is heard is a world in which hope still resonates. Or, to quote Margot Friedländer: "Be human." **Melanie Diener**



The "International Opera Workshop Waiblingen" is a project of the city of Waiblingen and is made possible with the kind support of our sponsors, partners, and supporters.

EVA MAYR-STIHL
STIFTUNG

 **Kreissparkasse**
Waiblingen

Opera
FOR
PEACE

