

# BIRGIT NILSSON PRIZE

## ABOUT THE FESTIVAL D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Founded in 1948 in the magical setting of Aix-en-Provence — the 'City of a Thousand Fountains' — the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence quickly established itself as one of the leading events on the international opera scene; it also emerged as a major hub for innovation, by exploring new approaches, revitalising the repertoire, and reshaping the relationship between works, performance venues and the audiences who come to discover new artistic horizons. Thanks to its international renown, the Festival has consistently collaborated with visionary conductors, cutting-edge stage directors, top-tier casts and orchestras, and the finest contemporary composers.

Historically associated with Mozart, the Festival explores four centuries of music history, showcasing diverse genres and aesthetics: Baroque opera, Grand opera of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and contemporary creation. Resolutely committed to new work, especially over the past two decades, the Festival d'Aix annually presents next to new opera productions from the repertoire, original commissioned works from celebrated composers as well as emerging ones. This commitment has produced key milestones in recent operatic history, such as *Innocence*, the last masterpiece by the great Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. After their world premieres in Aix-en-Provence, these productions then tour the globe, thanks to numerous partnerships with prestigious opera institutions from Europe to Australia (Adelaide Festival), the United States (including the Metropolitan Opera) and the Middle East (Abu Dhabi Festival).

Always innovative and creative, it also produces lighter forms of musical theatre, designed to tour easily. Additionally, the Festival offers an ambitious concert programme, which combines symphonic repertoire, operas in concert form, prominent vocal performances, contemporary music, jazz, and Mediterranean music.

The Festival d'Aix has always looked to the future, seeking new talents who will contribute fully to its artistic renewal and uphold its values of equity, diversity and inclusion. It has striven, from its inception, to discover and support young talent from all nationalities, helped to launch their careers, and offered them a degree of international visibility. For over twenty-five years, the Académie, an international centre for advanced artistic training and creation, has served as a unique professional springboard for early- and mid-career artists. The Festival also supports the development of the most talented young artists from the Mediterranean region, through its Orchestre des Jeunes de la Méditerranée (OJM), which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024 and has been an integral part of the Festival for over a decade.

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The Festival's commitment to inventing the opera of tomorrow is coupled with both an ambitious approach to achieving broad accessibility and a political will to maintain strong regional roots. Aix en Juin, a free pre-festival event, draws in over 15,000 people; and in July, more than a third of the Festival's tickets are priced below €60. The awareness-raising, artistic-practice and discovering-opera activities led by Passerelles, the Festival's cultural action department, are also essential and reach over 5,000 participants annually throughout 40 municipalities in the Sud-PACA region. To enrich the audience's experience, the Festival offers nearly 60 other events — meetings with artists, discussions with professionals, and pre-performance talks — which many experience live, but which can be revisited, along with recordings of Festival operas, on #TheDigitalStage, a digital extension of the Festival.

The Festival's economic model, which carefully balances multiple objectives while refusing to compromise artistic excellence, has always been complex, challenging and fragile, as is the case with many cultural organisations. The model hinges on the Festival's capacity to generate a key portion of its revenue. The post-COVID period was difficult for all, and the Festival is no exception, yet it overcame these challenges thanks to the unwavering loyalty of everyone involved: its exceptional public, corporate and philanthropic partners, who have proved steadfast in their support; all members of its professional teams, without whom none of this would have been possible; its ever-growing and diverse audiences and industry professionals and journalists, who bestowed it with a number of prestigious awards in recent years, honouring the quality of the Festival's programming and impact.

The 2025 Festival d'Aix-en-Provence runs from 4 – 21 July

[Link to programme.](#)