

17th Cesti Competition at the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik ends with a spectacular final concert – Elene Gvritishvili takes home first prize

The 17th 'Pietro Antonio Cesti' International Baroque Opera Singing Competition came to an end on 30 August 2026 with some inspiring performances. Over four days, 86 singers from all over the world took to the stage, and the expert jury selected their favourites from this high-calibre field of participants.

In the final of the Cesti Competition, the **soprano Elene Gvritishvili from Russia** emerged victorious and was awarded first prize. Second prize went to **mezzo-soprano Laura Orueta from Spain**, whilst third prize was awarded to **bass-baritone Luis-Felipe Sousa from Brazil**, who also impressed the audience and received the Audience Award. The Young Artists Award went to mezzo-soprano **Lora Grigorieva from Russia**.

A total of 210 participants from 29 countries registered for this year's Cesti Competition. 86 of them travelled to Innsbruck at the start of the week to take part. On Sunday 30 August, **nine finalists** demonstrated their skills in the grand final – in front of a packed auditorium. As well as the audience at the Haus der Musik Innsbruck, viewers from all over the world also followed the final concert via livestream.

In the compulsory programme for the final, the singers performed, amongst other pieces, an aria from **Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's opera 'Adriano in Siria'**. This opera is due to be staged next year at the Innsbrucker Festwochen as part of the Barockoper:Jung programme, with the cast drawn from all rounds of the Cesti Competition.

Mezzo-soprano Laura Orueta, who won second prize, can also look forward to an engagement with Il Gusto Barocco under the direction of Jörg Halubek. No fewer than five other participants from the first and second rounds of the competition will have the opportunity to further their artistic development at the 2027 Festwochen Masterclass with Anna Bonitatibus. The third-place winner and audience favourite, bass-baritone **Luis-Felipe Sousa**, received an invitation to perform at Resonanzen Wien.

But that's not all: further engagement prizes will take the young singers beyond the borders of Innsbruck and into the international Early Music scene. **Mezzo-soprano Valentina Ferrarese** was awarded the Allegorica Award, whilst first-prize winner **Elene Gvritishvili** received an invitation to Milano Arte Musica. Scherzi Musicali is offering an engagement to tenor **Alessandro Vianelli**. Further prizes and invitations, to be announced at a later date, underscore the Cesti Competition's international network and open up concrete next steps for the participants on their artistic journey.

The **jury**, chaired by Sebastian Schwarz, consisted of the following members: Ottavio Dantone (Music Director of the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik) and Eva-Maria Sens (Artistic Director of the Innsbrucker Festwochen), opera singer Anna Bonitatibus, Francesco Corti (Musical Director at Drottningholm Palace Theatre), Paolo Monacchi (Managing Director at Allegorica Opera Management) and Boris Ignatov (Casting Director at the Stuttgart State Opera).

This grand finale of the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik attracts young singing talents from all over the world every year. The competition, named after the Italian composer Pietro Antonio Cesti, who made Innsbruck a centre of Italian opera north of the Alps in the 17th century, is one of the most important singing competitions in this field of music. **The announcement of the winners marked not only the end of the competition, but also the end of this year's Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alten Musik.**

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