

PRESS RELEASE

Frankfurt am Main, February 22, 2015

Two second prizes and one third prize awarded at the 7th International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti in Frankfurt am Main

After a thrilling competition concert featuring the three finalists of the 7th International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti, the jury announced its decision to award a 2nd prize each of **Tung-Chieh Chuang from Taiwan** (32 years old) and **Elias Grandy from Germany** (34 years old) and a 3rd prize to **Australian Toby Thatcher** (26 years old). No 1st prize was awarded.

Franziska Reichenbacher, known to German TV viewers as the "Lotto Fairy Queen", led the audience through the closing competition concert at Alte Oper Frankfurt Sunday morning, when the three finalists conducted **Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester**. Three of the works performed had been assigned to each of the finalists by lot, i.e., the 2nd „Leonora Overture“ by Ludwig van Beethoven (Elias Grandy), the Overture to "The Flying Dutchman" by Richard Wagner (Tung-Chieh Chuang), and the „Carnival“ Overture by Antonín Dvořák (Toby Thatcher). In addition, all three candidates conducted Richard Strauss' symphonic poem „Don Juan“.

Andres Orozco-Estrada, Musical Director of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony and speaker for the jury, announced the jury's decision and commented on the decision, which the jury had based on the rehearsals the previous Friday and Saturday and this morning's public finale: "It is not easy to award prizes. All three candidates work on an incredibly high level and have enormous potential. We were just missing nuances to award a first prize." In his opinion, the crucial challenge for the finalists, just as for all participants, now was how to use the platform the Competition provided to further develop their careers.

The two winners of the 2nd prize will each take away 10,000 Euro while 3rd place carries with it a prize money of 5,000 Euro. In addition, the two winners of second prize will be invited to conduct concerts with Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony. Further orchestras such as Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and Polish Chamber Symphony Sopot, may offer guest engagement or assistance positions.

For **the first time in the history of the Competition**, all concert goers were invited to vote on an **Audience Prize**, which by a vote of more than 59% went to **Tung-Chieh Chuang**. **Competition director Dr. Burkhard Bastuck** presented the prize, an original Sir Georg Solti's baton from his Frankfurt era.

The exciting morning came to a sparkling conclusion when Tung-Chieh Chuang conducted the concert version of Leonard Bernstein's Overture to „Candide“.

The **Jury of the Final Round** consisted of the following members:

Ivor Bolton, Chief Conductor (Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, Music Director designate, Teatro Real Madrid), Ulrich Edelmann (Concertmaster, The Frankfurt Radio Symphony), Prof. Sebastian Nordmann (Executive Director, Konzerthaus Berlin and Konzerthausorchester Berlin), Andres Orozco-Estrada (Chief Conductor, The Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Music Director, Houston Symphony Orchestra), Dr. Stephan Pauly (Executive Director, Alte Oper Frankfurt), Michael Traub (Head of Music and Orchestra division at Hessischer Rundfunk; General Manager, The Frankfurt Radio Symphony), Gilbert Varga, Chief Conductor, Taipei Symphony Orchestra. Lady Valerie Solti, Patroness of the Competition who was to chair the jury, became ill at the last moment and had to cancel her trip to Frankfurt.

367 young conductors aged between 19 and 35 years from 64 countries had applied to this year's Competition. Of those 367, 20 applicants were invited to Frankfurt to participate in the first round and semifinal held from February 17 to 20, where they conducted **The Frankfurt Radio Symphony** and **Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester**.

How the Competition was financed

Financing for the 7th International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti was provided by a **consortium of supporting organizations**. **Deutsche Bank Stiftung**, whose generous support had helped to establish the Competition from the very beginning, continued its

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support. **Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain**, which had financed the 6th Competition 2012, joined the group of supporters. For the first time, **Dr. Hans Feith und Dr. Elisabeth Feith Stiftung**, die **Frankfurter Volksbank**, **Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft** as well as **The Solti Foundation**, helped to provide financing. **Lady Valerie Solti**, the legendary Sir Georg Solti's widow, continues to act as patroness of the Competition.

Information on the Winners

Winner of 2nd prize and of Audience prize:

Tung-Chieh Chuang (32)

Prize winner at the Gustav Mahler Competition Bamberg and the Jeunesses Musicales Bucharest International Conducting Competition, Taiwan-born conductor Tung-Chieh Chuang displays musical talent at a young age. Born in a family of musicians, Mr. Chuang learned to play piano and horn and had his first concerto appearance at age of 11. Since winning the Mahler Competition in 2013, Mr. Chuang has attracted numerous worldwide engagements. Hailed for his command of musical tones and structures and rich palette of expressions, Mr. Chuang has worked with Die 12 Cellisten der Berliner Philharmoniker, Bamberger Symphoniker, Deutsches Nationaltheater und Staatskapelle Weimar, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, National Symphony Orchestra (Taiwan), Taipei Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Jenaer Philharmonie, Filarmonica George Enescu, Filarmonica de Stat Sibiu, Severočeské filharmonie Teplice, among others. In 2010, Mr. Chuang was the recipient of Edwin B. Garrigues fellowship at Curtis Institute of Music. Same year he co-organized the Curtis Japan Benefit Concert in Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, where all proceeds were donated to Red Cross Japan for the 311 earthquake relief. In 2012, he organized the first-ever orchestra-flashmob performance in Taiwan, in which he led the National Taiwan University Symphony Orchestra as their principal conductor.

Winner of 2nd prize:

Elias Grandy (34)

Born in Munich, Elias Grandy studied conducting with Hans-Dieter Baum in Berlin and 'Cello, music theory and chamber music performance in Basel and Munich. As a member of the Academy of the Bavarian Radio Symphony, he performed under such renowned conductors as Mariss Jansons, Riccardo Muti or Bernard Haitink. He rounded his education off by participating in master courses with Menahem Pressler, Walter Levin, Peter Gülke and Fabio Luisi, who invited him to join the Conducting Academy of the Pacific Music Festival in Japan. While still enrolled as a student, he gave his debut as an opera conductor in Rheinsberg, followed by new productions at Heimathafen Berlin and at the Tirana National Theatre. Elias regularly works with Deutsches Kammerorchester Berlin. Since the 2011/12 season, he has been principal conductor (Kapellmeister) at Staatstheater Darmstadt, which has allowed him to further expand his conducting repertoire. In the past two years he conducted several productions of Rollando Villazon's „Stars of Tomorrow“ broadcast by ARTE. From the 2015/16 season on Elias Grandy will hold the position of General Music Director of the City of Heidelberg.

Winner of 3rd prize:

Toby Thatcher (26)

Toby Thatcher was born in Sydney, Australia, and studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, before completing his postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music, London. During this time Toby participated in several international conducting masterclasses, studying with pedagogues such as Neeme and Paavo Jarvi, Johannes Schlaefli, Leonid Grin and Nicolas Pasquet. Immediately following his graduation Toby was invited as one of 12 young conductors out of 120 applicants to audition for the Assistant Conductor position with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, a process in which he was placed in the final four. He also reached the shortlisted stage for the Malko International Conducting Competition and in January 2015 was invited to apply for the position of Assistant Conductor with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In 2014 Toby was offered a trial with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for the position of Principal Cor Anglais, and placed on the extra list for the Philharmonia Orchestra. In 2013 Toby performed with the London Sinfonietta at the Royal Festival Hall.

Between 2012-13 Toby was a principal player of the Australian Youth Orchestra, taking part in their European tour led by Christoph Eschenbach and Joshua Bell. This afforded Toby the opportunity for Toby to perform in some of Europe's leading concert halls, including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Berlin Konzerthaus. At the age of 19 Toby was chosen as one of a handful of young conductors to participate in the Symphony Australia Young Conductor Development Programme. This allowed him to work with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonic and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra over a period of two years. Toby is the founder and director of London-based chamber orchestra Ensemble Eroica, and also guest conductor of contemporary music group ensemble x.y.

The International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti is a joint project of Alte Oper Frankfurt, Frankfurter Museums-Gesellschaft e.V., Hessischer Rundfunk and Oper Frankfurt. This year's Competition was made possible by Deutsche Bank Stiftung, Dr. Hans Feith und Dr. Elisabeth Feith-Stiftung, Frankfurter Volksbank, Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, Stiftung Polytechnische Gesellschaft, and the Solti Foundation. Lady Valerie Solti acts as the Competition's patroness.