

# Mark of quality

The World Federation of Music Competitions continues to welcome new members. Here we introduce the newest, each with its own special qualities and unique character

Classical music changed forever last century as waves of European composers and performers crossed the Atlantic to find refuge from revolution and repression. Today's shaping forces of globalisation, digital media and air travel have continued the transformation, connecting audiences around the world with Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, while creating the conditions for composers born far from central Europe to enrich the repertoire. The World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC), founded in 1957 by Europe's leading contests, has broadened its membership base in recent years in line with classical music's expanding global reach.

The WFIMC's international outlook is clear from the latest additions to its membership list, which includes two new competitions in Asia. 'I am pleased to welcome six new members from various parts of the world to WFIMC,' comments Florian Riem, the organisation's newly appointed Interim Secretary General and CEO of the Tongyeong International Music Festival and the ISANGYUN Competition in South Korea. 'As we continue to expand, it is ever more important for me to safeguard and focus on the values that the World Federation stands for: artistic excellence, flawless organisation, fairness and integrity.'

Riem surveys the WFIMC's changing geographical balance and growing presence throughout Asia from his office in Korea. The next WFIMC General Assembly, he

notes, is set to take place in Hamamatsu, Japan in 2020. 'Traditionally, the majority of our member competitions have always been based in Europe. While a growing number of competitions come from countries in Asia, it is also great to welcome two new member competitions in China and Singapore.'

## Éva Marton International Singing Competition

Hungarian pride and passion combined in 2014 to create the Éva Marton International Singing Competition. The biennial event was established by Éva Marton in her role as professor at the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. The dramatic soprano's brainchild grew from her desire to encourage independence and self-confidence among young singers.

András Csonka, Programme Director of the Liszt Academy's Concert Centre, says that Marton had long planned to hold a competition in her home city. The project found an ideal partner following the Concert Centre's opening in 2013. 'She gave us the idea,' he recalls. 'Before the Academy's reconstruction, we didn't have a concert management department. We set up a team to organise concerts and it became the basis for the competition. It was a first for us and has helped build our expertise.'

Csonka and his colleagues also run the Bartók World Competition and are rebuilding the Budapest Liszt Competition. 'The Federation is a very prestigious



Vocal futures: The 2018 Éva Marton International Singing Competition

organisation and we're proud to become a member,' he says. 'It is a big thing for the Liszt Academy. For Hungarian singing students, the Marton Competition is a benchmark. It's important for them to step on to the international stage and be judged with the world's best young singers.'

## International Stanisław Moniuszko Vocal Competition

Stanisław Moniuszko, born two centuries ago this year, fell into relative obscurity beyond Poland following his death. The composer became the 'father of Polish opera', thanks not least to works such as *Halka*, an international success, and *Straszny Dwór*. Warsaw's Wielki Theatre, which he served as director in the mid-1800s, has led the Moniuszko bicentenary celebrations

with landmark dates, including the 10th edition of the International Stanisław Moniuszko Vocal Competition. The biennial event, established in 1992 by the soprano Maria Fołtyn, joined the WFIMC just after its most recent edition in May.

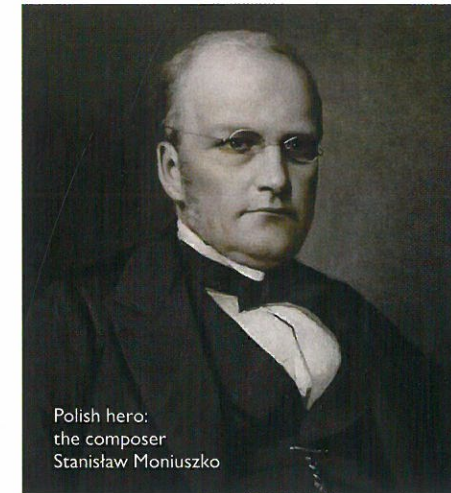
'This was our biggest competition yet,' says its director, Beata Klatka. 'We had already made important changes to the jury structure in 2013. Its members were mostly high-profile singers or singing teachers before that, but we brought in agents, critics, casting directors and other influential people from the music business. Our competition is demanding for some young singers because it includes two obligatory Polish pieces. But we feel they benefit from discovering music by Moniuszko, Szymanowski, Karłowicz and so on and

MOHAI BALÁZS

## 'The Federation stands for artistic excellence, fairness and integrity'

from adding this music to their repertoire.'

Klatka says that achieving Federation membership felt like winning a prize. The recognition, she adds, places the Moniuszko Competition in company with Poland's WFIMC founding members, Warsaw's Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition and Poznań's Henryk Wieniawski International Violin Competition. 'It's important that we're seen in this company. Maria Fołtyn, who



Polish hero: the composer Stanisław Moniuszko

died in 2012, started our competition at a time of difficult transition in Poland after the collapse of communism. She dreamt of joining the Federation and I know she would have been delighted that we have become members.'

## Andorra International Saxophone Competition

In the world of microstates, Andorra stands proud. The tiny landlocked nation, Europe's sixth smallest, consists of seven parishes clustered in valleys formed by the eastern Pyrenees. Tourism accounts for most of its income, a point not lost on the founders of the Andorra International Saxophone Competition, saxophonist Efreem Roca and Jordi Llorens Musoles, a veteran of Spain's film and TV industry. Their enterprise, launched five years ago and held every April since, arose from the success of a three-day pilot project of saxophone workshops, masterclasses and concerts in 2013. The competition's festive feel is one of its trademarks, along with its jury's high calibre and the adventurous spirit of its contestants.

'It's been hard to make this happen every year,' Llorens Musoles admits. 'But we think it's very important for young players to have the opportunity.' Efreem Roca agrees. 'One of my students at the Institute of Music in Andorra asked me when he would be ready to take part in a competition,' he recalls. 'It was very difficult for young players in Andorra then to get that experience, which is where the idea for our competition came from.'