

Presseinformation



„Young European Music Festival 2026“

Successful EYOA launch of new festival across the metropolitan region

- **Nearly 80 top young talents from across Europe performing at a professional level with exceptional commitment**
- **More than 1,000 enthusiastic attendees give standing ovations**
- **Press praises “electrifying concerts,” “they play as if they were born into jazz,” “soloist Hannes Wagner shines,” “young big band from eight countries performs at a top level”**

Mannheim, September 2026 – The Young European Music Festival 2026 of the European Youth Orchestra Academy (EYOA) concluded over the weekend following seven concerts in Mannheim, Heidelberg, Ludwigshafen, Worms and Schwetzingen. More than 1,000 attendees visited the events. The program included two chamber concerts, two big band concerts, two symphony concerts, and a final concert featuring both symphony orchestra and big band in the nearly sold-out Mozartsaal of Mannheim’s Rosengarten. The chamber and big band concerts were newly introduced elements of the annually recurring festival.

A total of 76 highly talented young musicians from 17 European countries worked together during the ten-day academy at the Mannheim Municipal Music School. Within this period, participants formed a symphony orchestra under the direction of Jan-Paul Reinke, several chamber ensembles, and, for the first time, an international big band led by renowned jazz musician Thomas Siffling. At the final concert in Mannheim's Rosengarten, the symphony orchestra and big band performed together, including the world premiere of Siffling's composition *“Home”* for symphony orchestra and big band. Several of the well-attended concerts concluded with standing ovations.

Distinguished guests

Mannheim's Lord Mayor Christian Specht drew a historical parallel in his remarks at the final concert: "Mozart sought a position at the Mannheim court – he stayed 163 days, unsuccessfully. EYOA stayed ten days and won the hearts of Mannheim." Thorsten Riehle, Mayor for Economic Affairs, Labour, Social Affairs and Culture, emphasized the European dimension: "Europe is not just an idea, but a promise of peaceful coexistence. A powerful and moving evening that rightly inspired great enthusiasm." Portugal's Consul General Domingos Maria De Saldanha Melo E Alvim attended the concert, reflecting the strong participation from Portugal, with 14 musicians represented. He noted: "The large number of Portuguese participants shows that our country is on the right path in supporting young people."

Strong media response

The press described the gala concert at the Rosengarten as "electrifying," praised the big band for delivering "jazz at a professional level," and highlighted the "impressive performances" in the chamber concerts. Particular attention was given to soloist and SINFONIMA award winner Hannes Wagner, who performed Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto on a 1678 instrument by Giovanni Battista Rogeri. One critic wrote: "On his violin, Hannes Wagner guided the audience through the composition, growing more confident and expressive with each movement." Reviewing the big band concert at the BASF Gesellschaftshaus, one journalist noted: "They leave behind an audience as surprised by this level of performance as even jazz professional Siffling himself admitted after the concert. It also deserves special mention how naturally the young musicians from eight nations connect with one another." Another reviewer concluded the gala, which ended with Beethoven's Symphony No. 8: "The wit of Beethoven's musical humor was delivered not only with precision but with just the right touch of lightness — the audience responded immediately with a standing ovation."

Emotional participant feedback

Participants have since returned to their home countries across Europe, taking with them lasting connections. "We came from different countries, but when we played together, we understood each other immediately," said a violinist from Portugal. A musician from Spain

added: “EYOA 2026 was an unforgettable time in Mannheim. I made great music with young people from across Europe and formed friendships that will last a lifetime.” Another participant from Portugal reflected: “EYOA was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life. It truly represents what music is: sharing, understanding, peace, and a universal language. We came from different countries, but when we played together, we spoke the same language.”

The EYOA team has already begun preparations for the next edition in 2027, which will be developed further under the theme “Odyssey Europe.”

About the European Youth Orchestra Academy (EYOA)

www.eyoa.de Funded exclusively through private donations, the European Youth Orchestra Academy (EYOA) is a European youth music project based in Mannheim — inspired by the city’s historic legacy as home of the Mannheim School. Since 2019, it has brought together approximately 50 to 80 young musicians between the ages of 14 and 18 from across Europe each year, totaling around 400 young people to date. Its mission is to foster cultural exchange, musical excellence, and European values across national borders. Participants are selected by an international jury and develop an ambitious concert program during a ten-day intensive bootcamp, which is then performed at public venues throughout the region. EYOA stands as a musical statement for peace, diversity, collaboration, and European solidarity. It is supported by private members, donors, and regional partners, as well as the European Parliament, the City of Mannheim, and the Europa-Union Baden-Württemberg as official patrons. Additional key supporters include Jeunesses Musicales, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Rotary Club Mannheim-Rhein-Neckar, and the SINFONIMA Foundation. Further information at www.eyoa.de

Further information, tickets, donations, press photos: www.eyoa.de

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