

Press Release
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Musical Cultural Remembrance: New Arrangement Competition Launched

Last weekend, international music history was written in Hanover: Europe's first international arrangement competition for musical remembrance culture was officially opened during the vocal music fair and festival chor.com.

The German Choral Association (Deutscher Chorverband e.V.) along with the German-Israeli research and education endeavour "Project 2025-Arche Musica" and Schott Music introduced the international arrangement competition for the "German-Jewish Songbook of 1912". The aim of the competition is to stimulate an active choral culture of remembrance and engagement with Jewish musical culture.

It is the first international arrangement competition for musical remembrance culture. Due to its international significance, it is highly endowed with prize money of 20,000 euros. In addition, three prize-winning compositions will be published by Schott Music. This is a unique opportunity for the current generation of musicians in Germany and Israel to create effective impulses for a new form of remembrance culture and for our shared musical heritage through their innovative arrangements.

Dr Felix Klein, the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Anti-Semitism who is also the patron of the new edition of the German-Jewish Songbook of 1912, was present at the opening ceremony and praised this extraordinary songbook as "an almost perfect testimony to the symbiosis that the two cultures have formed over the centuries. Especially in today's times, when Jewish life in Germany is once again under massive pressure, I emphatically support this welcome endeavour to establish Jewish music and thus Jewish joy of life as part of everyday German culture."

Christian Wulff, former Federal President and President of the German Choral Association, emphasized: "Music can move people in a very special way and make them experience what we share with each other. Music brings the culture of remembrance to life! We are celebrating the establishment of diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel 60 years ago next year. With the songbook and the competition, we are remembering our long shared cultural history and we're writing the next chapter."

The arrangement competition is open to Israeli and German citizens as well as residents of Israel and Germany. The composers are asked to immerse themselves in the field of musical culture of remembrance and create new arrangements of one song each from the Hebrew- and German-language parts of the songbook. The complete call for entries is available here (in German and English): www.deutscher-chorverband.de/erinnerungskultur.

The jury will be composed of an equal number of Israeli and German choral music experts, chaired by Danny Donner (conductor, composer and head of the music department of the Tel Aviv School of Arts) and Stephan Doormann (choral conductor, music teacher and artistic director of chor.com). The jury will evaluate the compositions according to their innovative value, compositional concept and the underlying idea of a musical culture of remembrance. An important criterion for the jury is that the compositions should be accessible for amateur choirs.

The German Choral Association will accompany the competition with innovative event and meeting formats on the topic and develop materials for schools and choirs in order to achieve a lasting effect.

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

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About the “German-Jewish Songbook of 1912”

The “German-Jewish Songbook of 1912” is unique in its type and conception worldwide. The author Abraham Zvi Idelsohn (1882-1938) created it as a collection of the most popular Hebrew and German songs and conceived it as a work of fundamental music education for music lessons in kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools in Eastern Europe, Palestine, Germany and the diaspora. Published by the Berlin “Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden”, it was largely financed by the Berlin patron James Simon, the founder and chairman of the association. It is an outstanding example of the on par use of Hebrew and German music at the beginning of the 20th century.

The bilingual layout of the songbook is unusual since the musical notation in the Hebrew part of the song collection is notated from right to left in the same way as the Hebrew script. It is the first documented work of its kind. The original, preserved in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, formed the basis of the new edition published by Schott Music in 2022. The scholarly editing of the 149 titles was carried out under the academic direction of Dr Gila Flam, Director of the Music Archive of the National Library of Israel in Tel Aviv, in particular the transliteration of the Hebrew texts and the transcription of the musical material of the approximately 100 Jewish songs.

The complete material is available digitally at:

www.arche-musica.org/work/sefer-ha-shirim-das-buch-der-lieder.