

After the cultural clear-cutting in the Bayerischer Rundfunk: The ARD saves on the music competition

The financing of the ARD music competition is uncertain, in two years several subjects could be eliminated. Previously, there had already been a fuss about planned cuts in literary broadcasts on Bayerischer Rundfunk.

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The uncertainties about the future amount of the broadcasting fee now also have an impact on the ARD Music Competition. This year it will still take place in its old form, next year as well. In 2025, one of the four subjects that have changed annually is to be eliminated.

The competition could possibly say goodbye to wind quintet, organ and guitar altogether, it was said at the press conference at the start of the 72nd edition of the competition, which begins on Monday.

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International Music Competition: ARD wants to halve its share, BR wants to increase its share



The cuts are part of the planned cancellation of literature programmes at Bayerischer Rundfunk. The ARD International Music Competition has been in existence since 1952. It is traditionally hosted by BR in Munich at the beginning of September.

ARD will contribute 740,000 euros, while Bayerischer Rundfunk, together with the sponsors, will cover the difference to the total cost of the competition of around one million euros. In 2025, ARD will halve its share to 370,000 euros. The BR wants to increase its share, and the loss of funds is also to be partially compensated for by savings and more sponsorship.

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How the music competition will continue, the participants can not say

Today, the Siemens Arts Program is supporting the competition with €100,000, as Stefan Frucht explained. He is the head of the company's cultural and sponsorship programs. The city's cultural department



provides support with rooms, and well-known manufacturers provide instruments.

The participants want to talk about how the music competition will continue from 2026 next spring, when it could become clearer at what level the future broadcasting fee will be. "2025 is secured and 2026 is not cancelled," said BR spokesman Markus Huber in response to a question about the future of the competition, whose "core" is to be retained but "further developed".

The music competition is a festival of international renown

At the press conference, the importance of the competition, which this year will be held in the subjects harp, double bass, piano trio and viola, was emphasized. 345 musicians from 41 countries applied, and after a pre-selection process, 215 participants will apply for the prizes. Many former participants in the competition now hold top positions in major orchestras such as the Vienna or Berlin Philharmonic or the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.



The competition features prominent prizewinners such as cellist Sol Gabetta, soprano Jessye Norman, the Quatuor Ebène and instrumentalists Heinz Holliger and Francois Leleux. No one could and did not want to explain the contradiction between the international reputation of the competition and the upcoming cuts at the press conference.

Why do the cuts in public broadcasting almost always hit culture?

BR spokesman Huber referred to the generally uncertain financing of public broadcasting. But why do savings almost always hit the cultural mandate and comparatively inexpensive formats, while other, very expensive areas seem to remain untouched?

All those present assured that change at the top had nothing to do with the imminent cuts. Oswald Beaujean, who led the competition alone from 2006 and in a duo with Meret Forster since 2016, retired in February without much fanfare, Falk Häfner took his place.

The music competition is not a top priority at ARD and BR

Häfner and Forster emphasized the further development of the competition in the repertoire. Works by female composers are among the compulsory pieces, and new music is an integral part of the competition. BR accompanies the competition on various channels in the media, and the "Festival of the ARD Prize Winners" ensures sustainability with chamber concerts by the prize winners in southern Germany, Salzburg and Tyrol.

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In addition to the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the two orchestras of the Bavarian Radio will participate in the semi- and final rounds. The conductors are Gábor Kali and Andrew Grams. And here we come to a



nakedness that BR has been doing for years: The ARD competition is not a matter for the boss musically.

Simon Rattle greeted the press conference via video. But can anyone remember that a chief conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra or the Radio Orchestra would have conducted a prizewinners' concert since time immemorial? The competition is open to the public.

Information on the dates can be found online at www.br.de. Final concert on 15 September in the Herkulesaal

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