



Compagnie der Schwarzen Häupter aus Riga

Gegründet in Riga vor 1232

Sitz Bremen · Haus Schütting

Compagnie der Schwarzen Häupter from Riga 2026
7th Music Competition
Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music in Riga

Distinguished guests, esteemed members of the Brotherhood, and above all:

Dear young musicians,

it is a great pleasure for me to welcome you today to the awards ceremony of our 7th Music Competition.

When we look around this hall today, we see not only the fruits of our Brotherhood's long-standing tradition, but we are also looking into the future of the European music scene. Our aim has been clear from the outset. We want not only to discover talent, but to accompany it on its journey. The fact that we are now able to do this for the seventh time in close cooperation with graduates of the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music fills us with particular pride.

The cradle of Latvian music:

Jāzeps Vītols.

To understand the quality of the talents we have heard yesterday and today, we must turn our attention to Riga.

The Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music is not just an educational institution; it is the beating heart of an entire cultural nation.

Founded in 1919 in the midst of the spirit of optimism surrounding the young Latvian Republic, it bears the name of its founder and first rector. Jāzeps Vītols himself was a giant. A student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and later a close friend of Glazunov and Liadov. He brought the glamour of the St Petersburg school to Riga and fused it with the deeply rooted Latvian national spirit.

A benchmark of excellence with tradition.

When we consider the Academy today in a European context, it does not need to shy away from comparison. Whilst major institutions in London, Paris or Berlin often impress through sheer size, Riga shines through with an incomparable intensity and depth.

In Latvia, music has an existential significance!

Let us consider the historical significance of music in the Baltic region. Here, choral singing and symphonic music were never mere entertainment. They were instruments of identity, resistance and freedom. This 'Singing Revolution', which we know from history, is embedded in the DNA of the Academy's graduates.

Big names such as Andris Nelsons, Mariss Jansons and the organist Iveta Apkalna have their origins in this school. They prove that those who make their mark in Riga are ready for the world stage. The Academy demands technical perfection, but above all it teaches the soul of expression. Something for which the Asians envy us so much.

A wish for the participants:

Dear participants,

You have already proven that you are among the very best. Through your interpretations, your passion and the magic of your playing, you have transformed the music in this room into a sound all of its own.

My hopes for you are high. I hope that this competition is only one stop on a journey that will lead you to the most famous concert halls in the world.

May you stand before the great orchestras – in Berlin, Vienna or New York. May you grow under the batons of the most significant conductors of our time and touch the very hearts of the audience with your music. You deserve this success, for you have worked hard for it.

With success comes responsibility! With all the glory I foresee for you, I also have a request: Never forget where you come from. Musical success is never the work of one person alone. It requires teachers who believe in you, institutions like the Academy that provide the space, and communities and patrons, such as our Brotherhood, that open up opportunities.

When you yourself stand in the spotlight one day, think of those who are then as young and hopeful as you are today. Become patrons yourselves. Pass on the chance for musical success. For music is an eternal dialogue, not only between sounds, but also between generations.

With this in mind let us now begin the award ceremony for the 7th Music Competition,

Compagnie der Schwarzen Häupter from Riga.

Thank you very much!