

Press release
February 15, 2018

**Birgit Nilsson Foundation to reveal
2018 BIRGIT NILSSON PRIZE RECIPIENT
at press conference in Stockholm, Sweden
on Tuesday, May 15, 2018**

On Tuesday, May 15, 2018 at a press conference at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, Sweden, the fourth recipient of the **BIRGIT NILSSON PRIZE** will be revealed. The Prize itself will be awarded in Stockholm at The Royal Opera House on October 11, 2018, with a general overview of the gala event being announced at the May 15 press conference.

The 2018 Prize has a special significance as we celebrate Birgit Nilsson's centenary. Birgit Nilsson was born on May 17, 1918, and in addition to awarding the Prize, a year-long celebration during 2018 has been organized by the Birgit Nilsson Foundation. Elements of this celebration will include:

- ***BIRGIT NILSSON 100 - An Homage***
712 page commemorative book published in English by Verlag für moderne Kunst in Vienna, with extensive photographs tracing the development of Nilsson's seminal roles, tributes from many of today's leading luminaries, plus an overview of her career through articles/reviews, etc.; available in May, this will be a limited edition
- ***BIRGIT NILSSON: A League of Her Own***
90-minute documentary (English and German versions) about her career and life, produced by Thomas Voigt and Wolfgang Wunderlich; to be distributed in Spring 2018 for television by UNITEL, with a commercial DVD to follow
- ***BIRGIT NILSSON: THE GREAT LIVE RECORDINGS***
SONY CD set (31 CDs) of exclusively live recordings, never-before commercially released; release date TBD.

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BACKGROUND on the BIRGIT NILSSON PRIZE

The extraordinary Birgit Nilsson Prize of one million dollars, the largest given in the world of classical music, is awarded approximately every 3 years for outstanding achievements and major contributions to the field of opera/concert to a currently active singer (in the field of opera, concert, oratorio, or lieder); a currently active conductor (in the field of opera or concert); an institution with an outstanding record in opera or concert, such as an orchestra, a chorus, or an opera company (in the case of an opera company, specifically in recognition of an exceptional production that respects the spirit of the composer). This Prize pays tribute to artists who have achieved and sustained the highest performance standards – documented by long-standing record of faithful service to the intentions of the composer – and who have made a major contribution to the perpetuation of this art form. These artists have added a chapter to music history and their contributions can be expected to stand the test of time.

Towards the end of her unparalleled, long and distinguished career, the legendary Swedish dramatic soprano Birgit Nilsson established the Birgit Nilsson Foundation exclusively to support this Prize. Being very concerned with the general decline of cultural values, in particular with the decline of performance standards in opera, and encountering much greater difficulties in the early years of her career than is generally known to the public, Birgit Nilsson believed that overcoming these difficulties motivated her and contributed to her future success. Along with honouring great artists and artistry, it was also her hope in establishing this Prize to provide inspiration to young artists to sustain their efforts to reach full potential by planning their careers over the long term and to perpetuate the art form.

This is the fourth time that the Prize will be awarded. Birgit Nilsson personally chose the first laureate, Plácido Domingo, who received the award in 2009. The second and third Prizes, 2011 conductor Riccardo Muti and 2014 the Vienna Philharmonic, were selected by a distinguished international panel of classical music experts from the major countries where Birgit Nilsson was most active during her career. The panel members, who are appointed by and work with the Foundation's board and who serve for renewable three-year periods, have remained the same for 2011, 2014 and 2018. They are:

- Germany: Eva Wagner-Pasquier, former Co-Director of the Bayreuth Festival
- Sweden: Bengt Hall, former Managing Director of the Malmö Opera, and former General Manager of the Royal Swedish Opera Stockholm
- United Kingdom: Rupert Christiansen, Opera Critic of the Daily Telegraph and Member of the Editorial Board of OPERA
- USA: Speight Jenkins, former General Director of the Seattle Opera
- Austria: Clemens Hellsberg, former President of the Vienna Philharmonic

The philosophy behind the Birgit Nilsson Prize is to perpetuate the legacy of Ms. Nilsson and Sweden's great operatic tradition by paying tribute to today's outstanding, **active** figures in music, recognizing the excellence of their work and their major contributions.

For background material on the Birgit Nilsson Prize, photos, video clips and TV material, including historic material on Birgit Nilsson www.birgitnilssonprize.org

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