



TOIVO KUULA SINGING COMPETITION 2025

Press Release

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City of Alavus
www.alavus.fi

The jury of the Toivo Kuula Singing Competition 2025 has been published!

The Toivo Kuula Singing Competition 2025 will be held for the fourth time on **9.-10. August 2025 in Alavus, Finland**. West Finland located city of Alavus is the birthplace of composer **Toivo Kuula**.

For the first time, the competition is open to international singers from different countries. The registration period has been extended until November 7, 2024. Registration form and more information of the competition is to be found on www.toivokuula.fi website.

The jury of the Toivo Kuula Singing Competition 2025 is featuring experience, charisma and the best-known Finnish professionals in the field. All members of the jury are international-level singers familiar to the Finnish audience, who in addition to performing career, have pedagogical experience and solid knowledge of Finnish vocal music. The chairperson of the jury is soprano **Kirsi Tiihonen**. Members of the jury are soprano **Mari Palo**, bass **Jaakko Ryhänen**, baritone **Walteri Torikka** and soprano **Sirkka Lamminen**, who is also the artistic director of the competition.

Sirkka Lamminen is very pleased with the jury assembly: *"I am delighted that the jury represents a wide range of expertise in the performance of vocal music and a versatile view of the curation of the repertoire.*

Liisa Heinämäki, **Mayor of Alavus**, says that Alavus wants to continue the significant cultural work it has started with the Toivo Kuula singing competition. The competitions held in the city where Toivo Kuula was born in 2012, 2016 and 2021 received a lot of positive feedback from competitors, judges and the public. It encouraged the city to continue the tradition of competition.

The chair of the jury, Kirsi Tiihonen, encourages the singers to apply with an open mind: *"I encourage singers of all ages to participate. There is no age limit in the competition. Toivo Kuula's music is demanding and requires strong technique and expressive maturity from the performer. Winning the Toivo Kuula Singing Competition is a real merit for a singer. Winners of the previous competitions have significantly benefited from the competition success terms of their careers."*

Awards

The three best singers of the Toivo Kuula Singing Competition 2025 will be awarded as follows: 1st place: €10,000, 2nd place: €6,000, 3rd place: €3,000. The jury will also award the Seppo Ruohonen Prize for the best interpretation of new music. The prize is worth EUR 1,000.

Competition schedule and implementation

The preliminary competition will be held in January 2025 in Seinäjoki. The semi-final on Saturday 9. August 2025 in Alavus. The competition will culminate in the final competition in Alavus Church on 10 August 2025.

Registration for the Toivo Kuula Singing Competition is until Thursday 7. November 2024. You can register for the competition using an electronic form at www.toivokuula.fi

Competition jury

The chairman of the jury, internationally distinguished top soprano Kirsi Tiihonen, has won numerous singing competitions. The most famous of these is the Cardiff Singer of the World singing competition, where Tiihonen won the first prize in the Lied category in 1995. Kirsi Tiihonen performs actively as an opera and concert soloist around the world. Her repertoire includes numerous operatic roles in works by Giuseppe Verdi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner, among others. Kirsi Tiihonen has been especially praised for singing all the roles of Brünnhilde in Wagner's tetralogy. Tiihonen has led numerous master classes and she teaches singing in Germany and Finland. Tiihonen has served as a judge several times, e.g. Lappeenranta Song Contest and Helsinki Lied competition. Tiihonen chaired the jury in the 2021 Toivo Kuula Singing Competition.

The artistic director of the competition, Sirkka Lamminen, has redeemed her place among the elite singers of Finnish classical music. Lamminen has been awarded in all major Finnish classical singing competitions. Lamminen has been a guest soloist i.e. at the Finnish National Opera, Opernhaus Zürich, Stadtheater Bern, Opera di Roma, the Hamburg State Opera, the Opéra de Baugé and the Estonian National Opera. Currently Lamminen is a lecturer at the University of the Arts Helsinki. She is a respected pedagogue, educator and commentator. Sirkka Lamminen has been awarded the Culture Prize of the City of Alavus and grants from several foundations.

Soprano Mari Palo

Mari Palo is one of the most sought-after Finnish sopranos on both domestic and international stages. As a versatile artist, Palo's radiant presence has captivated audiences across genres, from classical lied and opera repertoire to lighter music. She has performed around the world as a lied singer and soloist with orchestras, and is also a popular guest at chamber music festivals. Palo has been a regular guest at the Finnish National Opera since 1999, with recent roles including Hanna Glavari in Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow* and Jaakko Kuusisto's *Mona in Ice*. Mari Palo works together with Kari Ikonen as the artistic director of the Oulu Music Festival. The President of the Republic awarded Palo the Pro Finlandia medal in 2019.

Bass Jaakko Ryhänen

Jaakko Ryhänen's international career as a soloist began at the New York Metropolitan in 1983. Since then, Ryhänen's regular visits have been major opera houses in Europe. He has been engaged as the soloist to the Vienna State Opera. He has also made regular appearances at the Lyric Opera in Chicago, Los Angeles and the Bayreuth Music Festival. In addition to his opera career, Jaakko Ryhänen has also sung as a concert and oratorio soloist around the world. Ryhänen continues his career actively primarily as a pedagogue, but also continues to give concerts intensively. In 2016, Ryhänen was awarded as the Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland, and in 1988 the Pro Finlandia medal by the president of the Finland. In 2013 he received the Finnish Cultural Foundation Award. In addition he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2014.

Baritone Waltteri Torikka is a Finnish opera and concert singer. He has been awarded with a grant from the Martti Talvela Foundation, the HSBC Laureates Prize of the Mozart Academy of the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Bayreuth Scholarship, the Pro Musica Foundation's Young Musician of the Year award and the winner of the Lappeenranta National Singing Competition. Torikka has performed as a soloist with all Finnish symphony orchestras and, for example, at the BBC Proms festival at the Royal Albert Hall, singing the title part of Sibelius's *Kullervo Symphony*. He has bravely broken and crossed genre boundaries in his home country. He has been involved in the creation of premieres of several operas, both as a performer and artistic director.

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