

“A 30th Anniversary and Limitless Musical Enjoyment”. isa21 – International Summer Academy of the mdw

Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

isa – the International Summer Academy of the mdw has proclaimed “unlimited” as its 30th-anniversary motto and will soon be taking place in a way that is fittingly unconstrained and limitless in all manner of respects. What’s more, the 150th birthday of Alexander Zemlinsky is being taken as an opportunity to put a special focus on those composers and performers who are not currently established within the concert canon despite their outstanding artistic status.

The summer campus of the mdw – University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna will be presenting a diverse range of offerings from 14 to 29 August. Following the severe restrictions due to the pandemic, this year will see the Rax/Semmering region once again come to life with a programme of live events and in-person master classes. “For 30 years, isa – the International Summer Academy of the mdw has been offering master classes at the highest artistic level. And the past pandemic year, in particular, the arts and culture proved just how systemically relevant they are. The mdw, with its Summer Academy, makes a significant contribution with respect to cultural policy. Students from all over the world benefit from engaging in exchange with excellent teachers, and young talents reflect here on the urgent socio-political themes of our times as part of an international artistic network,” says mdw Rector Ulrike Sych.

“isa will not let itself be limited in terms of art or creative imaginativeness—neither by difficulties stemming from the pandemic nor by widely supposed, often historically established habits and categories”, states Johannes Meissl, isa’s artistic director. “And especially in the case of this jubilee edition of isa, three decades after the opening of political borders that had long been viewed as near-impenetrable, we view the deliberate exploration of areas beyond our usual boundaries as an immense opportunity.”

Master Classes for Voice, Instrumentalists, and Composers:

isaMasterClass / 14-29 August

Our isaMasterClass programme offers master classes and workshops for strings, wind players, pianists, chamber music, composition, and the performance of contemporary music, combining digital and in-person formats led by prominent teachers from all over the world: the list of tutors at isa21 ranges from Shmuel Ashkenasi, Alfred Brendel, Boris Berman, Emmanuelle Bertrand, and André Cazalet to Thomas Hampson, Dag Jensen, Xenia Jankovic, Michael Jarrell, Andrea Lieberknecht, Sharon Kam, Jérôme Pernoo, Dora Schwarzberg, and Ulf Wallin.

International Conference: isaScience / 11 to 15 August

The international conference isaScience, likewise now in a hybrid format, will be taking place from 11 to 15 August at Schloss Reichenau. The theme of this academic conference, “Heroes, Canons, Cults. Critical Inquiries”, draws an arc from 2020’s Beethoven memorial celebrations and isa’s 30th anniversary to the plurality and diversity of all those musics and performance practices that have been and continue to be excluded from the canon of Western art music and “high culture”. In this regard, the isaScience theme also relates to isa21’s motto of “unlimited”, which puts breaking through existing or supposed boundaries front and centre. Scholarly and artistic research on musical heroes and canons has frequently served to reinforce dominant structures and perceptions of music—such as the heroic image of the white male composer, the ethnocentric portrayal of certain musics as parts of a worldwide cultural canon, or the exclusion of women from canonisation processes.

Concert Series: isaFestival / 14-29 August

Around 35 public events are slated to take place in the Semmering-Rax region between 14 to 29 August. One special emphasis of the festival will be its cooperation with the mdw’s exil.arte Centre for Banned Music. Encounters with “unheard(-of)” music, to include works by exiled women plus a 150th birthday nod to Alexander von Zemlinsky, will be important accents. The range of the isaFestival’s programming extends from early music to jazz.

isaDigital, On-Site and Online / 15-29 August

isa’s accustomed interdisciplinary mix will be expanded by “isaDigital”. This digital isa format, created as a stopgap measure back in August 2020, ended up generating synergies and bringing together participants from numerous countries onscreen. The present year will see this format’s positive effects combined with isa’s many years of experience on location in the Semmering-Rax region, uniting the digital and the analogue realms. isa’s workshops, concerts, and master classes will be streamed nearly the entire time—thus enabling participation by all those people who are unable to attend in person.

Conveying Music to the Region’s Residents: isaOutreach, 22-26 August

The isaOutreach project “sounds of nature unlimited” will be seeking out nature’s own sounds at isa21 as well as compositional “realisations” of them in the most varied styles and musical eras. What sound does a blade of grass make, what might a chaffinch have to tell us, and how can water make music? Natural sounds, after all, have been and continue to be important sources of inspiration for works by numerous composers.

This project will include field trips for collecting sounds heard out in nature under the guidance of a team from Vienna’s University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, and its concluding presentation will take place on Thursday, 26 August at Literatursalon Wartholz in Reichenau/Rax.

About isa

Each year, isa—in collaboration with numerous international partner universities—offers around 200 students from over 40 nations a diverse programme consisting of courses, workshops, lectures, events, and crosscutting interdisciplinary projects. Decades spent progressively developing what began in 1991 as a 13-student masterclass for strings have since resulted in an event that is unique the world over. Moreover, the past several years have also seen the long-established courses for solo instruments, chamber music, piano, voice, composition, and contemporary music joined by the music outreach programme isaOutreach as well as the international and interdisciplinary academic conference isaScience.

About the mdw

The mdw - University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna numbers among the world's largest and most renowned universities specialised in music, theatre, and film. Over 3,000 students from more than 70 countries are currently being trained in 115 degree programmes encompassing music and other performing arts, science and research, and education. The mdw's altogether 25 departments include the Max Reinhardt Seminar and Film Academy Vienna.

Further details on isa21 can be found at: <https://www.mdw.ac.at/isa/>

Enquiries

Monika Mistlbachner
isa - International Summer
Academy of the mdw
T: +43 664 887 90 819
mistlbachner@mdw.ac.at

Doris Piller
mdw Press / Public Relations,
Office of the Rector
mdw - University of Music
and Performing Arts Vienna
T +43 1 71155-7430
piller@mdw.ac.at
www.mdw.ac.at