

Leipzig, 9 May 2024

Audible colours

14th Leipzig International **a cappella** Contest opens with four groups from the worlds of jazz, pop, and world music

The **a cappella** Contest returned in full swing. Nine groups from three countries – among them some fairly young talents – secured their spots in this year's lineup, eager to showcase their vocal skills to both jury and audience. The competition kicked off on the first day with the amplified ensembles.

The group **Just Vox**, travelling the furthest, namely from Brussels, opened the event. This Belgian quintet – comprising three female voices, one male voice, and a beatboxer – evoked memories of the previous French winners, Ommm. Although Just Vox cover songs by other artists, they arrange everything themselves, crafting a compelling interpretation of modern, urban and independent a cappella worlds with their fresh sound, a flair for world and electronic music, expressive vocals, and strong stage presence. Definitely an ensemble to watch, they found many new fans in Leipzig.

The sheer dedication and talent of **Lylac** from Mainz are apparent from the fact that, despite having only started out in 2021, they came third in the Contest when they competed last year. This diverse quintet focused primarily on vocal jazz, presenting a range of original pieces from the energetic 'Train to Neverland' to the emotive 'Falling', performed unamplified. This young, engaging group has already developed a musically sophisticated style, and it will be intriguing to see how their journey unfolds. Their competition performance finished to resounding applause.

Notable from Weimar was another mixed quintet with a jazzy, pop feel, formed just the previous August. They made an impressive start with Lizzy McAlpine's melancholic 'Ceilings', and their beautiful voices and sincere tone swiftly captivated the audience. This group, too, also presented exclusively home-made arrangements, drawn deftly from their 'Back Pocket', and something we should be 'Grateful For' (a song with very

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successful audience participation). Their set ended with the original 'Schlaflied' ('Lullaby'), performed without microphones – an excellent conclusion to their entry that met with well-deserved applause.

The day's finale featured **soulparlez** from Vienna. The four women delivered six original compositions, and their performances (like their stage outfits!) were perhaps the most extravagant and distinctive among the contestants. Instead of relying on vocal extremes, their music focused on layers of sound, dabs of musical colour, storytelling and emotion. Their soulful, jazzy and slightly folk-infused numbers all resonated musically and developed slowly but surely, introducing a relaxed atmosphere into the mix and effectively showcasing the singers' personal touch. This was a captivating entry that rounded off an exciting first day, leaving us eager to see what the groups would present on the second day.

24th Leipzig International Festival of Vocal Music **a cappella:**
3–11 May 2024

14th Leipzig International **a cappella** Contest:
8–11 May 2024

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Review



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