

Leipzig, 05.06.2025

Church, Club, and Classroom **Day 1 of the 15th "a cappella" Contest in the Great Hall of the Gewandhaus**

The anniversary of the Leipzig "a cappella" festival is in full swing, and shortly after the midpoint, the "a cappella" Contest also begins its quasi-round, namely the 15th edition. The special feature of this year is that the young talent contest takes place not in the Mendelssohn Hall as usual, but in the Great Hall of the Gewandhaus. It would be a lie to say that this setting and acoustics are not also suitable for offering international young vocal musicians a grand stage.

Unfortunately somewhat reduced due to illnesses, the 2025 contest ultimately presents three – very different – ensembles per competition day.

The **Ensemble SoaVI** from Leipzig opens the first round. Dressed in black and elegant shades of blue, the sextet very professionally serves up a competition program that is primarily sacred in character. The classical foundation of their training at the local music conservatory is clearly audible in sound, dynamics, and style, and they also know how to make good use of the large stage space across its breadth through different formations and positions. Acoustically, everything the three singers and three vocalists do comes across excellently (partly for this reason as well). A respectable presentation in all respects, only (despite the different eras and composers' styles in their program) one more stylistic color would have been nice.

The Menagerie Club from London then presents a contrast to the classical precision of the Leipzig group, traveling entirely on the modern, popular upbeat a cappella track. This is already made clear by their outfits: dark urban chic with leopard print and glitter accents. They too go all out from the start, and these voices also know what they're doing and want to be. Unfortunately, the microphone mix is not optimal, as under the very driving and present bass, beatbox, and lead vocals (and in the height of the Great Hall), the backing voices tend to blur. Two original pieces fit seamlessly into their pop(ular) repertoire with a soul slant (Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, etc.), and the ballad-like "If You Can Dream" reveals the greatest

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potential in the details through its quietness. The British group pulls off their program in the manner of a small club show, and after the brisk "Get Busy" they've earned themselves corresponding applause.

The diversity of the contributions on this competition day could not be greater, because third up on stage is **Sonus Aeternus**, a quintet with a Kruzianer background. The 19-year-old guys boldly present themselves as a cappella ambassadors of their actually larger, choral ensemble with a selection of pieces from across the choral music spectrum. These young men freshly grown out of choir life have already cultivated a sound; it just needs a bit more fine-tuning and carrying power in a few places. Suit and bow tie are their outfit of the day; when the program shifts to secular music halfway through, the jackets can also be neatly removed to the side... With "Untreue" by Friedrich Silcher, "Deutschlehrerin" by the Wise Guys, and their own pieces "Prayer" and "El Torero," Sonus Aeternus shows their potential best (and also humor – that's never wrong).

Three more ensembles of different natures will perform on Thursday, then it will be time for jury and audience to choose their respective favorites. And for the groups: on Friday, to show and discover new facets in a masterclass and their joint "Showcase" concert – a must for the audience as well!

25th International Festival for Vocal Music **a cappella** Leipzig:
May 30 – June 7, 2025

15th International **a cappella** Contest Leipzig:
June 4 – 7, 2025

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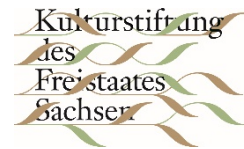


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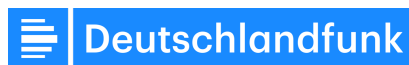
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