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Child prodigy with his own composition in Halberstadt

Halberstadt (ee) · At twelve years of age, Maximilian Cem Haberstock is the youngest of seven participants in the Orchestral Workshop for Young Composers in Halberstadt. During the course of the workshop the musician has been working on his Symphonic Suite for Orchestra, which he describes as a “tone poem somewhere between Beethoven and Mahler.” The young people from all over Germany have been working on their compositions since Sunday. From 10.30 this morning, the orchestra of the Nordharzer Städtebundtheater in Halberstadt will be giving the first public performance of their works. **Page 22**

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“I think in 24 voices at the same time”

Maximilian Cem Haberstock is the youngest participant in the Orchestral Workshop in Halberstadt

[**Headline from web version:]**

A TALENT FOR MUSIC

Ambition: to be a conductor

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In addition to composing and conducting, Maximilian Cem Haberstock is also a gifted pianist. In April the twelve-year-old from Munich performed at the famous Carnegie Hall in New York City. (Photo: Carnegie Hall)

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Maximilian Cem Haberstock working on his Suite for Orchestra with Artistic Director Johannes Rieger. (Photo: Emily Engels)

Talented young people from all over Germany have gathered in Halberstadt for the 28th Orchestral Workshop organized by the Music Council of the Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt. Among them is one particularly young participant: the twelve-year-old Maximilian Cem Haberstock from Munich.

By
Emily Engels

Halberstadt · For Maximilian Cem Haberstock it all starts with the piano. When he sits down at the instrument, there they all suddenly are: the melodies, the themes, all the different colors a symphony orchestra can offer. “Actually I no longer think in fewer than twenty-four staves at the same time,” says the schoolboy from Munich. In itself, this is not particularly unusual for a composer. But Maximilian is only twelve years old, and that makes him the youngest participant at the orchestral workshop in Halberstadt.

“Bar sixty-one needs more tam-tam,” Maximilian tells the musicians of the Nordharzer Städtebundtheater. Artistic Director Johannes Rieger cannot help smiling—and neither can the string players of the front desks of the orchestra. Not because they don’t take what he says seriously, but because they are visibly impressed and somehow moved by the precise thinking of a twelve-year-old.

Maximilian was selected for the orchestral workshop as one of seven participants, having applied on the basis of the fourth movement of his *Symphonic Suite for Orchestra*—the storm. “In terms of style, I would place it somewhere between Beethoven and Mahler,” explains the young composer. Overall, the work has much of the tone poem about it, and in contrast to many contemporary compositions, is not remotely atonal.

Martin Christoph Redel, one of the tutors and a jury member, justifies his decision to accept Maximilian onto the course by explaining: “As a participant he is, of course, absurdly young, but he submitted an extremely good application for his age.”

Another tutor, Annette Schlünz, comments: “It’s pretty impressive how error-free he’s already able to compose at the age of twelve.” And Maximilian himself? He talks about music with such ease and of his achievements with such naturalness. No wonder, because he’s already been playing the piano for more than half his life, and composing since he was nine—a quarter of his life.

For Maximilian, the rehearsal evening with the orchestra in Halberstadt is an exciting moment because he’s hearing his *Symphonic Suite* played by a real orchestra for the first time. At home the young musician composes on a computer system. When a composition is played back by the digital “orchestra,” the bass drum sounds so ghastly that he has had to temporarily rearrange a number of works in order to avoid it,” he explains.

To have come so far musically by the age of twelve requires a lot of discipline, which Maximilian says he has developed himself. “My daily schedule is precisely calibrated,” he explains. Several evenings a week he goes to the University of Music and Performing Arts in Munich for a few hours after school. There he is taught composition by Professor Kay Westermann.

Meanwhile Maximilian receives coaching in conducting as part of a program at the Städtische Sing- und Musikschule, Munich’s school of singing and music. Next year he will be applying to the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich as a junior student in the conducting department.

There’s a leitmotif for every character

Indeed a conductor is what Maximilian would like to be, and he is already drawing inspiration from the greats. He regularly watches Mariss Jansons rehearsing the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. “There’s a lot one can learn from him,” says Maximilian, “he’s so precise.” Mariss Jansons has also advised the young musician that in order to become a conductor he needs to completely master an instrument, and this is a piece of advice Maximilian has taken to heart. A few weeks ago he played the piano in a venue many musicians can only ever dream of appearing at: the Carnegie Hall in New York City, where he performed a work by his favorite composer, Beethoven.

As a composer, Maximilian is currently trying his hand at what is the preeminent genre for any composer. His first opera is based on the story of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. “In addition to the different characters, particular atmospheres also have their own leitmotif,” explains Maximilian, one example being the midnight theme, when Hamlet’s ghost appears.

In order to understand the original text, Maximilian has no need of a translator, for the twelve-year-old is fluent in three languages: German, English, and Turkish, the first language of his mother Elif Haberstock.

Maximilian is also among the class leaders at his high school, the Wilhelmsgymnasium in Munich. “I usually get my homework done relatively quickly,” he says, attributing his academic achievements to talent as well as diligence. Elif Haberstock explains that “in everything he does, the only problem is holding Maximilian back. Fortunately, thanks to his good grades, he’s repeatedly able to have time off school for concerts and master classes—and for that we’re very grateful to his school.”

Once Maximilian's school and music lessons are over, what he really likes to do is to shut himself away and finally write down all the tunes that have been floating around his head all day.

The Orchestral Workshop for Young Composers

The 28th orchestral workshop for budding composers from all over Germany is being held in Halberstadt. The **age limit** for participants is **twenty-seven**. This year they range from **twelve** to **twenty-six** and hail from six different federal states. The young composers spend four days working on their musical compositions with a team of tutors. This year the tutors are Annette Schlünz (Strasbourg) and Martin Christoph Redel (Detmold). In addition to the workshop, there is a **composition competition** in which the four best works are honored. The concluding concert, at which selected works are premiered under the baton of Johannes Rieger, takes place from 10.30 this morning at the Nordharzer Städtebundtheater in Halberstadt.