

OFUNAM INTERNATIONAL CONDUCTING COMPETITION

Eleven young conductors aspire to the OFUNAM International Conduction Award

Thursday, September 13th, 2018 04:15

LIVE STREAM: <https://livestream.com/musicaunam/events/8375688>

- The sessions of this Award, one of a kind in Mexico, will be open to all audiences at the Nezahualcoyotl Hall from September 17th to 23rd.
- Contestants will work with the OFUNAM to interpret selected works of the Mexican and world repertoire.
- Young conductors from China, the United States, Colombia, Venezuela, Singapore, Spain, Israel and Mexico compete to win the award.

The OFUNAM International Conduction Award reaches its final stage. The eliminatory and the last concert to determine the winner will take place from September 17th to 23rd in the Nezahualcoyotl Hall of the University Cultural Center. Sessions will be free and open to all public.

Eleven young conductors from China, United States, Colombia, Venezuela, Singapore, Spain, Israel and Mexico compete to win this one-of-a-kind competition in the country. The Coordination of Cultural Diffusion of the UNAM, through the General Music Coordination, organizes this first edition inspired by the Eduardo Mata International Orchestra Conducting Award, which the UNAM and Instrumenta Oaxaca carried out last decade, and which included the OFUNAM as Resident Orchestra in the editions of 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

The Prize, one of a kind in Mexico, has the purpose of stimulating the artistic formation and professionalization of young conductors who are building an international career. Its call was addressed to participants from all over the world born after April 26th, 1983, and a total of 93 applicants were registered.

With ages ranging from 25 to 35 years, the eleven conductors who will participate in the final rounds are: Carlos Andrés Agreda Arango (Colombia), Rodolfo Barrález Medina (Venezuela); Jiannan Cheng (China), Jiajing Lai (China), Jing Zhan Li (China), Boon Hua Lien (Singapore), François López-Ferrer (United States / Spain), Ilya Ram (United States / Israel), Jonathan Spandorf (Israel), Dean Whiteside (United States) and Mexican Jorge Vázquez Melgarejo.

The winner will be chosen by a jury made up of renowned personalities from the world of music: Massimo Quarta, conductor of the OFUNAM and who will serve as president of the jury; Atso Almila, recognized as one of the great teachers of Orchestral Education in the world; Josep Caballé Domenech, musical conductor of different international orchestras; Claire Gibault, first woman to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic

Orchestra; and Jorge Mester, Mexican conductor with an important career, currently conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra of Boca del Río.

In the Qualifying Round, to be held on Monday 17, Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 between 8:30 and 12:00, the eleven contestants will work with the OFUNAM conducting works from the international repertoire. There will be four conductors per day and each one will have up to 35 minutes to show their qualities and skills in the orchestral conduction.

They must conduct two works: one chosen by themselves from a repertoire with overtures by Beethoven (Egmont), Berlioz (The Roman Carnival), Rossini (The Barber of Seville), Strauss (The Fledermaus), Mozart (The Magic Flute) and Verdi (The Force of Destiny), and another overture that will be determined by a lottery that will take place this Sunday, September 16th, including first symphony movements by Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert and Schumann.

The jury will select the six conductors who will advance to the semifinal round. They will work with the orchestra for 50 minutes, three contestants a day on Thursday 20 and Friday 21, from 8:30 to 12:00. They will conduct as compulsory work the Indian Symphony by Carlos Chávez, as well as the first movement (chosen by them) from a concert for violin by Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart or Tchaikovsky.

At the end of the day on Friday, the jury will determine the three conductors who pass to the final round of the contest and who will rehearse with the OFUNAM on Saturday 22 between 8:30 and 12 o'clock. They will be preparing the two works that they will conduct in the final concert on Sunday 23rd, at 12:00.

In the concert to choose a winner, they will conduct a compulsory work, *Collage for an Orchestra*, by Armando Luna, and a movement of a symphony that will be selected by lottery: the first movement of Brahms' Symphony no. 2, the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 5 and the fourth movement of Dvorak's Symphony no. 9, Of the new world. Once the performances have been completed, the final deliberation will take place and the OFUNAM International Conducting Award will be awarded.

Three prizes will be awarded: for the first place, six thousand dollars and invitations to conduct a concert during the 2019-2021 seasons with at least 20 orchestras in Mexico and other countries; for the second prize, three thousand dollars; and for the third prize, one thousand five hundred dollars.

All rounds and the final concert will be held in the Nezahualcoyotl Hall of the University Cultural Center and will be open for the public. For further details visit: www.cultura.unam.mx/premiofunam

**Rodolfo Barrález, from Venezuela,
wins the OFUNAM International Conducting Competition**

Sunday, September 23rd, 2018

- **The award was presented at the Nezahualcoyotl Concert Hall of the Centro Cultural Universitario, after a concert in which the three finalists conducted different works of the international repertoire.**
- **The winner, aged 24, is a graduate of the National System of Youth and Children Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela.**
- **The criteria taken into account by the jury were knowledge of music, human quality, skills necessary to communicate with the orchestra and energy on stage.**

The 24-year-old Rodolfo Barrález from Venezuela was the winner of the first OFUNAM International Conducting Competition, an award given by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the UNAM and the General Direction of Music of the University.

With great charisma and kindness to conduct the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra from the podium, with passion, good technique in the use of hands, knowledge and empathy to communicate with the musicians, the winner was chosen by the jury as the best performer of this contest in which a total of 93 conductors under the age of 35 participated.

Barrález has studied music all his life in his native country. First he was a singer, then he played the flute and finally decided on the violin. Upon detecting his talent as a musician, his teachers pushed him to try conduction. He is currently a traveling conductor of the National System of Youth and Children Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela and he is coursing postgraduate studies at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. He was also one of the 14 selected conductors in the 2016 Mahler Competition.

"I was trained in the Venezuelan system. The first time I conducted, I didn't know that I could conduct. I simply stood and started to correct: 'Violins, this! Woods, can we do this?!, Horns, let's give it a little more of this!", he said at a press conference.

"But to be a conductor —he said— Not only do you need technical and musical ideas. That is something you can study and learn. The other fundamental thing for a conductor is the personal part (...) how do you tell the orchestra your musical ideas? How do you get them to respond to you? They have to like you (...) and share your ideas. I am not a dictator", he said.

As the winner, Barrález received a prize of six thousand dollars, as well as the invitation to conduct a concert during the 2019-2021 seasons with some of the almost 20 orchestras in Mexico and abroad that support the award.

The second place, with a prize of three thousand dollars, was awarded to the Chinese Jiajing Lai, 27 years old. Lai was also granted by the OFUNAM a special recognition for a great performance on stage during the final concert and the previous days of eliminatory rounds and rehearsals. This prize will consist in conducting a concert with the orchestra. The third place, of 1,500 dollars, was awarded to the Spanish-American François López-Ferrer, 28 years old.

In the eliminatory round, held from Monday September 17th to Wednesday 19th, 11 conductors rehearsed with the OFUNAM for 30 minutes in the Nezahualcóyotl Concert Hall. On Wednesday, the jury chose four semifinalists, and on Friday, they jury selected the three finalists.

In the final concert this Sunday, the three participants performed *Collage for Orchestra*, by Armando Luna (1964-2015), an obligatory work of the contest that stands out for its use of all the instruments, which implies a high level of complexity for the conductor.

The second piece of the concert was chosen in a raffle for each conductor. Jiajing Lai played the first movement of Brahms' Symphony No. 2; François López-Ferrer played the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, and Rodolfo Barráez, the fourth movement of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9.

The three participants showed great power and ease to conduct the OFUNAM during the concert, but in the end the jury, after a long deliberation of almost one hour and a half, decided for Barráez.

In a press conference, the jury highlighted that some of the criteria for choosing the winner were: The conductor should have great musicianship, demonstrate human quality, have the necessary skills to communicate with the orchestra with signs and gestures and to reflect energy on stage.

In the final ceremony, the organizers also recognized the work of the rest of the contestants who reached the eliminatory round, to whom they awarded a diploma. Among them, stands out the Mexican Jorge Vázquez, who obtained the fourth place. The rest of the conductors came from countries such as Israel, Colombia, United States and Singapore.

The young conductors thanked at all times the creation of this award and applauded that Mexico, and in particular the UNAM, encourages their work and the creation of new talents among the younger generations.

The jury of this first edition of the competition was integrated by Massimo Quarta, artistic director of OFUNAM; Atso Almila, conductor at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts in Helsinki, Finland; Josep Caballé Domenech, musical director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Bogotá; Claire Gibault, creator of the Mozart Orchestra of Paris, and the Mexican

Jorge Mester, renowned international conductor and currently artistic director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Boca del Río.

The OFUNAM International Conducting Competition will be a biannual competition. The competition is inspired by the Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition that was awarded last decade. This award is special for being entirely organized by the UNAM.