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# A century in motion: Celebrating 100 years of music and dance at the HfMT Cologne

One hundred years after its founding, Cologne's premier music and dance institution looks to the future, blending musical heritage with modern expression. A week-long festival offered a vibrant showcase of its legacy, creative vitality and forward-looking vision



Singing Mörike.  
Photo © Alessandro de Matteis

— HfMT Cologne —



Verve Quartet Photo © Alessandro de Matteis

The Cologne University of Music and Dance (HfMT Cologne) is celebrating a milestone anniversary this year: a century of musical and dance excellence, innovation and tradition. During a week of celebrations (23–27 June 2025), the public was invited to explore the diverse artistic disciplines at the HfMT Cologne through a series of events and to experience the high calibre of its work.

Featuring classical and contemporary masterpieces, jazz, dance and academic lectures, the programme catered to a wide range of interests. Performers included both students and faculty members, who showcased the university's creative breadth and innovative spirit. The week's programme was curated by Vice Rector and violinist Professor Ariadne Daskalakis, who described the celebrations as an opportunity to showcase the breadth of the university's disciplines while honouring its artistic legacy over the past century.

The celebrations opened with a concert featuring prize winners from national and international competitions, followed by a jazz performance and a song recital in tribute to Eduard Mörike and Rainer Maria Rilke, offering a vibrant interpretation of their poetry through art songs. Selected works by Hugo Wolf, Wolfgang Rihm, Brahms, Bernstein, and Ernst Krenek, among others, were presented not only as musical performances, but also enhanced by scenic and improvisational elements.

The following day, young composers performed pieces by Oxana Omelchuk, Tom Belkind, Joan Tan and Lucia Kilger, underscoring the university's commitment to contemporary

music. In the evening, chamber works by Hans Werner Henze, a long-serving professor at HfMT Cologne, featured in the programme, with selections from his children's opera *Pollicino*, including three fairy tales, and a trio for mandolin, harp and guitar, alongside pieces from the Italian Baroque tradition.

With the concert *Notes that were Forbidden*, the university acknowledged the darker chapters of its past. Melodies from operas and operettas commemorated composers who were murdered by the National Socialists or forced into exile, and whose works were banned during the Nazi era.

The celebrations also included an internal chamber music competition, with 25 ensembles performing throughout the course of the week for a place in the final. The competition was a highlight of the programme, with the Verve Quartet (Jiwoo-Han, Yerim Yang, Doi Kim and Caspar Westerman) winning First Prize for their outstanding performance of Dvořák's *String Quartet No. 13 in G major, Op. 106*.

Other highlights of the festival week included a lecture on "New Music in Cologne from the 1950s", an organ and fortepiano recital which took the audience on a journey through music history from Bach to Beethoven, and Mendelssohn to Charles Tournemire. In the movement composition *Passing Through*, dancers invited the audience to see space as an interconnected network of pathways.

The week concluded with a celebratory ceremony that brought together figures from politics, culture and civil society to reflect on the university's journey and its evolving role in the artistic world. Speeches acknowledged not only the institution's historic achievements, but its responsibility to nurture creativity in an ever-changing world. Louwrens Langevoort, Artistic Director of the Cologne Philharmonic, underscored the essential role of the arts in a democratic society and the enduring value of education. Echoing this sentiment, Rector Professor Tilmann Claus spoke of the university's commitment to openness, cultural diversity and progressive thinking—values that will continue to shape the next generation of musicians, dancers and scholars.

The anniversary celebrations will continue after the summer break. For more information, visit [www.hfmt-koeln.de](http://www.hfmt-koeln.de)



Dance. Photo © Alessandro de Matteis