



verbierfestival

PRESS RELEASE

GEORGIAN SOPRANO ANA ONIANI AWARDED VERBIER FESTIVAL ACADEMY'S TOP HONOUR

2 August 2026 – Verbier (Switzerland) – The Verbier Festival Academy has announced Georgian soprano Ana Oniani as the recipient of the **2026 Prix Yves Paternot**, awarded annually to the most accomplished and promising young musician of the Verbier Festival Academy.

The announcement came immediately following Oniani's compelling performance as Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*, presented by the Academy's Atelier Lyrique with the Verbier Festival Junior Orchestra under the direction of James Gaffigan.

Established in memory of **Yves Paternot** — founder of The Friends of the Verbier Festival and a long-serving member of the Festival Foundation Board — the Prix Yves Paternot honours exceptional artistic achievement and future potential. The award includes CHF 10,000, an invitation to perform at a future Verbier Festival, and eligibility for up to CHF 15,000 in additional support for artistic and professional development.

Originally from the mountains of Georgia, **Ana Oniani** initially studied conducting before turning to singing. She graduated in vocal performance from the Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire (2020–2024), where she performed leading operatic roles including Mimì (*La bohème*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), the Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Violetta (*La traviata*). She has since appeared with the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Royal Opera House Muscat alongside Plácido Domingo, and the Ningbo Symphony Orchestra in China. Her repertoire also includes Clotilde (*Norma*) and Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), while her concert appearances have included Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and Poulenc's *Requiem*. In 2025, she joined the Académie de l'Opéra national de Paris.

"Ana possesses a remarkable naturalness on stage. She sings with an ease and sincerity that immediately draws the listener into her world. Her performance as Violetta this afternoon held the audience completely captivated and confirmed what our faculty had recognised throughout the Academy — an exceptional young artist with a very bright future," said **Stephen McHolm**, Director of the Verbier Festival Academy.

"The Academy has been one of the most inspiring experiences of my life. To work with such extraordinary teachers and colleagues, and to perform this role in Verbier, has been a dream. Receiving the Prix Yves Paternot is an incredible honour and encouragement as I begin the next stage of my career," commented Oniani.

With this honour, Oniani joins the **distinguished group of past Laureates** , which includes:

Anton Beliaev, baritone – Laureate 2025

Trio Concept – Laureate 2024

Ava Dodd, soprano – Laureate 2023

Bryan Cheng, cello – Laureate 2022

Sungho Kim, tenor – Laureate 2021

Meigui Zhang, soprano – Laureate 2019

Timothy Chooi, violin – Laureate 2018

Adèle Charvet, mezzo-soprano – Laureate 2017

Milan Siljanov, bass-baritone – Laureate 2016

Other Academy Prizes

A number of other prizes were also awarded by the Academy during its final weekend:

- **Prix APCAV** – CHF 3,000 for Academy students who contribute to the spirit of the Verbier Festival through a commitment to community and public engagement.
Winner: Héloïse Houzé, viola (France)
- **Goldman Sachs Gives Award** – CHF 5,000
Winner: Fibonacci Quartet (United Kingdom)
- **Prix Jean-Nicolas Firmenich** – CHF 10,000 for cellists.
Winner: Benett Tsai, cello (Australia)
- **Prix Reyl** – CHF 5,000 for violinists.
Winner: Mariam Abouzahra (Germany, Egypt, Hungary)
- **Prix Rodolphe et Helen Tissières** – CHF 5,000 for an artist of merit.
Winner: Hyunseo Kim, violin (South Korea)
- **Prix Rotary** – CHF 5,000 for a Swiss musician.
Winner: Lyam Chenaux, cello (Switzerland)
- **Prix Thierry Mermod** – CHF 10,000 for singers.
Winners: Fanny Soyer, soprano (France); Yu He, baritone (China) – CHF 5,000 each
- **The Tabor Foundation Award** – CHF 10,000 for pianists.
Winner: Zhexiang Li, piano (China)

OFFICIAL PHOTOS

The 33rd edition of the Verbier Festival took place from July 16 to August 2, 2026 in Verbier (Switzerland). It was made possible thanks to the essential support of all its public and private partners: public institutions, including the Commune of Val de Bagnes, Loterie Romande and the Canton of Valais, Banque REYL Intesa Sanpaolo as Principal Sponsor, as well as all sponsors, foundations, patrons and The Friends of the Verbier Festival.

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