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Venice Music Biennale announces award of Golden Lion to composer Kaija Saariaho and Silver Lion to Neue Vocalsolisten.

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This year's Venice Music Biennale is composer Lucia Ronchetti's first as Artistic Director and as part of the activities planned for the Biennale, Ronchetti has chosen composer Kaija Saariaho [pictured] to be awarded its Golden Lion (Leone d'oro) and the Silver Lion (Leone d'argento) to vocal group Neue Vocalsolisten. Ronchetti has programmed this year's Music Biennale, Choruses, to focus on the human voice and how composers throughout time have responded to it. One of the key reasons Ronchetti chose Saariaho to receive the Golden Lion was for the originality of her vocal compositions, as well as for her extraordinary technical and expressive levels achieved in her choral scores.

Saariaho will receive her Golden Lion award at on 17 September in the Sala delle Colonne at Ca' Giustinian. The award ceremony will be immediately followed by a public discussion with Saariaho and Ronchetti. Ronchetti commented:

"I am honoured to award the Leone d'oro per la musica to Kaija Saariaho, a leading figure in contemporary musical creativity. An original artist with an unmistakable style, whose sound textures synthesise Debussy's timbrical ideation with refined explorations of sound material, creating a personal musical language that engages and enlightens her global public."

The inaugural concert of the Music Biennale will be held at the Teatro la Fenice on 17 September and will feature the Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro La Fenice conducted by Ernest Martinez-Isquierdo. The programme will include the first Italian performance of Saariaho's 'Oltra Mar' for choir and orchestra from 1999 and the first Italian performance of an orchestral work by Hans Abrahamsen composed in 2011 based on the orchestration of Claude Debussy's 'Children's Corners'.

The vocal ensemble Neue Vocalsolisten of Stuttgart will receive the Silver Lion for their creative collaborations with many of the greatest contemporary composers and in particular for their work in developing the a cappella vocal repertoire in the field of contemporary writing.

The Silver Lion award ceremony will take place on 20 September in the Sala delle Colonne at Ca' Giustinian. The award ceremony will be followed by a public discussion with members of Neue Vocalsolisten and Ronchetti.

On Sunday 19th September in the Tesa III of the Arsenale, the Neue Vocalsolisten will present two world premieres: a work for voices and electronics by the American composer George Lewis, commissioned by the Biennale Musica, and 'Die Einfachen', a work of vocal theatre for six solo voices by the Russian composer Sergej Newski.

Ronchetti is a composer whose recent successes include her new chamber opera Pinocchio's Abenteuer at the Berlin Staatsoper which is available to view at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-YF61MUr00> and her Opera-Film Rivale from the FIFA Festival in Montreal which can be viewed at www.luciaronchetti.com/en/works-by-lucia-ronchetti/music-theatre/rivale/p5-25-1710.