



photos: Serena Sáenz, © Dovile Sermokas; Lang Lang, © Sonja Mueller; Jonathan Tetelmann, © Rubén Plasencia

Press Release, Nov 17, 2026

Danish Research Foundation launches the annual €850,000 Daphne Awards uniting Music and Science

- **Pianist Lang Lang announced as inaugural laureate of the Daphne Music Award**
- **Tenor Jonathan Tetelman and Soprano Serena Sáenz honored as Next Generation Artist**
- **Award ceremony on May 14, 2026, at Tivoli Concert Hall with the Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic under the baton of Alondra de la Parra**

The **Danish Research Foundation** announces the launch of the **Daphne Awards** – a new significant international prize that places music and science on equal terms. The awards celebrate music not only as a cornerstone of human culture but as a transformative force that shapes the brain, the body, and society itself. With this vision in mind, the board strives to honor artists at the height of their career: internationally acclaimed musicians who have had a lasting impact within their respective field but also look to shape the future of classical music for many years to come.

The inaugural Daphne Music Award – endowed with €650,000 – will be presented to pianist **Lang Lang**, one of the most influential artist of our time. In addition, **Jonathan Tetelman** and **Serena Sáenz** will be honored with the €100,000 endowed Next Generation Award recognized for their vocal brilliance and artistic presence.

The ceremony will take place on **May 14, 2026**, at **Tivoli Concert Hall**, featuring the **Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic** conducted by **Alondra de la Parra**.

“With the Daphne Awards, we aim to highlight the role of music as a universal language - one that expresses ideas and emotions in ways that words alone cannot. At the same time, we want to acknowledge the artists and researchers who deepen our understanding of this language and make its value visible. The strength of a society is not measured by its wealth, but by the choices it makes in challenging times. Supporting culture and science means supporting empathy, reflection and the long-term resilience of our communities.”

– Official statement from the Danish Research Foundation

daphne awards™

First award uniting music and science

The Daphne Awards are the first prizes to acknowledge that music and science together shape the human experience, honoring musicians whose artistry not only moves audiences but also advances our understanding of how music influences the mind, the body, and the very fabric of society.

“In medical research and clinical care, music has shown a remarkable capacity to ease anxiety, support emotional balance and stimulate memory. Yet beyond therapy, music and science together embody two complementary ways of understanding the human condition: one through reason, the other through resonance. In an age of growing fragmentation, sustaining both is not a privilege but a necessity. Without science we lose understanding; without culture, we lose ourselves.”

– Peter Lodahl, Spokesman of the Daphne Awards.

Starting in 2027, the Daphne Awards will introduce a science prize in addition to the music prize.

The award winners

The Danish Research Foundation selected pianist **Lang Lang** as the inaugural Daphne Award laureate, recognizing his exceptional artistic presence and his dedication to the social dimensions of music.

“Through his exceptional artistry and charismatic presence, Lang Lang has introduced classical music to a broad and diverse audience, inspiring interest and curiosity far beyond traditional circles. Through the Lang Lang International Music Foundation and its initiatives such as Music Heals and Keys of Inspiration, he has shown how music can broaden opportunities, nurture creativity and support strong, engaged communities.”

– Joint statement of the 2026 board of the Danish Research Foundation

Soprano **Serena Sáenz** and tenor **Jonathan Tetelman** will each be honored with the Daphne Next Generation Awards. Praised for his expressive voice and emotional intensity, Jonathan Tetelman has rapidly become one of the most in-demand tenors of his generation. Serena Sáenz, acclaimed for her radiant timbre and technical brilliance, is one of the most exciting emerging sopranos on the international opera stage.

About the Danish Research Foundation

The Danish Research Foundation, founded in 1992 by Dr. Bente Juel Riis Christiansen, MD and Dr. Claus Christiansen, MD, is a driving force in advancing clinical and basic research, nurturing scientific talent and supporting Denmark's cultural and charitable development. In the past, the Foundation has distributed over 35 million Euro in grants to support scientific, cultural, and charitable initiatives. Through this dual commitment to science and culture, the Danish Research Foundation aims to foster a well-rounded, enlightened, and culturally vibrant society, where innovation and creativity go hand in hand. The Daphne Awards mark the culmination of its mission to foster dialogue between creativity and knowledge – between music and the human mind.

For the Daphne Awards, the Danish Research Foundation commissioned the Copenhagen-based visual artist Sif Itona Westerberg to design the award sculpture. Her artistic language, inspired by the modern relationship between nature and humanity, perfectly embodies the prizes' aim to build bridges between science and music.

More details about the Daphne Award online [here](#)

Further information to the Danish Research Foundation online [here](#)

Tickets for the gala are now on sale [here](#)

Instagram: [@daphne_awards](#)

YouTube: [@DaphneAwards](#)

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