

Munich/Bayreuth, Germany, August 21, 2010

Siemens Festival Night 2010 opens with children's program

A special Wagner experience for children and parents

The Siemens Festival Night wants to win youngsters for tomorrow's opera public with its program on August 21, 2010 in Bayreuth. To attract the young, the public viewing event at the Volksfestplatz will first feature a children's program. Prior to the live broadcast of *The Valkyrie* from the Festspielhaus at 4:00 p.m. for adults, the day will start off with the screening of the Wagner Festival premiere of *Tannhäuser for Children*. Following this playful version of the opera, budding young opera fans will enjoy a special series of activities related to what they have just seen. Drama instructor Ursula Gessat, working with the Siemens Stiftung, developed the Wagner experience concept and transformed it, with a team of helpers, into an imaginative program for children.

The free program was created for children seven years or older together with their parents. This playful interactive part of the Siemens Festival Night aims at familiarizing a very young public with the music, characters and plots of Richard Wagner's operas. In discussing her concept for the Wagner experience, Ursula Gessat says that "the Wagner experience offers children an opportunity to develop their own images and ideas relating to the themes of the plot and the staging of the children's opera."

In a series of hands-on stations, young visitors get a glimpse behind the scenes of the Festspielhaus, slip into the roles of the opera figures, listen to pieces from the opera, explore the secrets behind the stage technology, and transform themselves into artists by creatively expressing their personal impressions of the production.

Whether painting scenery along the nearly one-hundred-meter mural wall, trying their hand with make-up, dressing up in costumes from the opera house, or even designing their own *Tannhäuser* costume – children can give free reign to their artistic spirit in the creative process of an opera production. They see how the stage equipment works, watch the property master contrive special stage effects and learn all about weapons and armor from the theater's arms expert.

The children can try out various instruments at the orchestra station, where musicians from the Festspielhaus orchestra and performers in the children's opera answer questions, demonstrate their instruments, play musical motifs from the opera and explain why the orchestra plays in a pit covered by a hood.

The event takes opera far beyond an exercise in merely sitting still and watching. The children experience what goes on behind an opera production in a creative and lively manner. They also learn about various theater professions and have a chance to slip into roles themselves. In dealing with the production, they see how each staging idea is only one of many possibilities for presenting the opera's story. This gives the children the possibility of creating a bridge between their own dream world, the themes of the *Tannhäuser* opera, and the children's production of the opera by Reyna Bruns.

The message offered by the Bruns film production – that you should be creative and give artistic and colorful impulses to the world – takes on concrete form in the interactive stations where the children can experiment with various themes themselves. Drama instructor Gessat sees the whole as a process in perspectives: "The children start with an opera on the screen and slip directly into their own world of creative action before perhaps ending up at four in the afternoon watching the public viewing of *The Valkyrie*."