

## Composer Mikis Theodorakis to receive IMC UNESCO International Music Prize for 2005



In an international jury meeting held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, it was decided to award the IMC UNESCO International Music Prize for 2005 to Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, who turned 80 this year.

Initiated in 1975 by Lord Yehudi Menuhin, the prestigious IMC UNESCO International Music Prize was established to honour musicians or musical institutions whose activities have contributed to the enrichment and development of music and have served peace, understanding between peoples, international cooperation and other purposes proclaimed by the United Nations Charter and UNESCO's Constitution. Past recipients of the IMC Music Prize include Dimitri Shostakovich, Leonard Bernstein, Yehudi Menuhin, Herbert von Karajan, Cesaria Evora and Mercedes Sosa, among others.

Mikis Theodorakis was chosen among some 40 nominees of world-class standing for the prize, which acknowledged his worth on a global basis. Nominations were made by members of the International Music Council as well as by Permanent Delegations and National Commissions of UNESCO Member States. The jury recommending the laureate to the UNESCO Director General was made up of His Exc. Mr. Henri Lopes, Ambassador of the Republic of Congo in France, who chaired the deliberation; Viera Polakovicova, Director of the Slovak Cultural Institute in Paris; Jacques Taddei, Head of Music at Radio France; Tereza Wagner, representative of the UNESCO Director General and senior programme specialist at the UNESCO Culture Sector.

This November, the Prize consisting of a diploma, a cash award and a UNESCO medal, will be awarded in the historic City of Aachen, Germany, host to the Prize since 1994, in the presence of representatives of the city, UNESCO and IMC.

In a career that spanned nearly all of Greece's troubled post-war history, throughout which Theodorakis played a prominent role and was repeatedly incarcerated for his political beliefs, he also managed to transform and redefine popular Greek music with works like «Epitaph», «Axion Esti» and «Romiosyni».

A statement congratulating Theodorakis for winning the prize was by Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis. «In an age when the need to underline the ecumenical language of culture is more urgent than ever before, the decision of the IMC and UNESCO to grant the 2005 Music Prize to Mikis Theodorakis acquires particular content and symbolism. The music and songs of our great composer have accompanied and still accompany the daily lives and the great moments not just of our compatriots but of people and peoples all over the world. His constant struggles for freedom, social justice and human dignity rise above national boundaries and become a legacy for all humanity,» Karamanlis said.

UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura called Theodorakis a musician and composer of international renown who distinguished himself through his “exceptional commitment to the cause of the liberty through musical creation”. IMC President Kifah Fakhouri expressed his admiration for the artist’s brilliant professional career and acknowledged Theodorakis’ “life-time work for the development and promotion of musical diversity and intercultural dialogue” as well as his constant concern about human rights.

In 2004, the IMC UNESCO International Music Prize was awarded to Senegalese singer and songwriter Youssou N’Dour.

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