



*"A joyfully spring-like artwork with an interesting composition. I see the sun's figure as a head full of bright thoughts. It wanders optimistically toward summer."
– Sebastian Lindberg, visual artist.*

Guardian of Water Art Competition Winner Announced for Niittylahti School in Joensuu!

The Guardian of Water art competition, which highlights international water responsibility linked to the *Wasser looking for his song* symphonic fairy tale concert, has come to a conclusion. The winning artwork was created by Jimi Nieminen from class 3A at Niittylahti School.

The **Guardian of water** themed art competition, connected to the symphonic water fairy tale concert *Wasser looking for his song*, was launched for 3rd-grade students (8-9 years old) who attended the performance in North-Karelia Finland, as well as for children of the same age worldwide through the Environment Online ENO international school network. A total of 175 artworks were submitted! While most entries came from Finland and North Karelia, enthusiastic participation also came from as far as **Italy, Slovenia, Ukraine and India**.

What kind of water guardian would you be, and what water would you protect? In the *Wasser looking for his song* musical, we turn our focus to bodies of water and the importance of protecting them. The production's philosophical framework is rooted in ecosocial education, which emphasizes a child's growth as part of the wholeness of life. The idea behind the art competition was to visually express the essence of water guardians and create new characters representing different bodies of water. The goal was also to inspire participants to find a personally meaningful and cherished body of water—one they wish to protect and preserve. The awakening sense of inner responsibility was important too; to improve the state of water ecosystems and halt the endangerment of species, people must deepen their understanding of aquatic nature and its significance—not only for us but for the entire planet and the interconnectedness of all life.

The *Wasser looking for his song* concerts were held in North Karelia between **September 25–27, 2024**, as a prelude to ENO's 25th anniversary celebrations. A total of six performances took place, five of which were school concerts as part of the Joensuu City Orchestra's Schoolchildren's cultural path program. One of the performances was an open evening concert for the whole family. The production also included immersive water-themed activities for schools both before and after the performances, with the art competition being part of it. Students had time to complete their artworks until January 31, 2025. The announcement of the winning pieces was scheduled around UN World Water Day on March 22. The Joensuu City Orchestra recorded the performance on video, allowing schools to return or watch the tale - for example with subtitles in their own language.

The jury had a challenging task of reviewing all the artworks and selecting a winner was naturally a difficult decision. The competition jury consisted of the following individuals, all involved in different ways in the *Wasser looking for his song* musical:

Sebastian Lindberg, a visual artist; **Karoliina Vilander**, project manager of the *Water, the Oldest Remedy – What on Earth?* project; and **Maire Turunen**, an environmental educator at ENO and producer of performances in North Karelia.

The winning work was Jimi Nieminen's guardian from class 3A at Niittylahti School, Finland. His artwork left the jury with a strong emotional and visual experience—it simply had that special something. The jury envisioned the guardian of water as a messenger of hope and goodwill, a traveler of the universe walking beneath a rainbow. The green-toned, misty landscape in the artwork brings to life an essential, abstract space—a place where hope walks and grows within us. The work has a mysterious atmosphere and still the piece conveys a sense of goodwill, one that the jury felt should strengthen in all of us. The artwork is sufficiently suggestive without being too explanatory, leaving room for the viewer's own thoughts and emotions while still being engaging and thought-provoking.

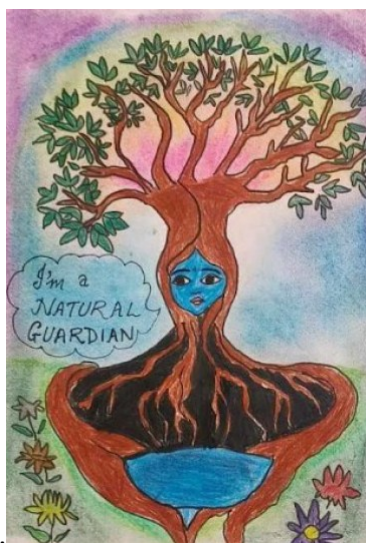
In addition to the winning piece, the jury selected six artworks for honorable mentions. These works were recognized for their skillful approach to the theme and strong visual expression. The jury also wanted to highlight a non-human figure where the concept of a Water Guardian was represented more as a state of mind rather than a figurative character—such as Iida Nuutinen's forest landscape artwork.

Congratulations to the winner and all those who received honorable mentions, and a big thank you to everyone who participated in the competition! The winner will be contacted personally regarding the prize. All recipients of honorable mentions will also receive a certificate of recognition.

You can view all the competition entries in the **online gallery** [here](#)

Watch the **video** featuring the winning artwork and honorable mentions [here](#) with Nu vänder vi om till Norden song from composer Johanna Almark.

Jury honorable mentions:



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.

1. Rabiya Khan, Tirathbai Kalachand School, Intia
2. Adhyay Dwivedi, Choithram School North Campus, Intia
3. Saverio Barbagallo 3B, C.D. Statale Zafferana Etnea, Italia

4. Milana Bobina, Marjalan koulu, Joensuu
5. Insiya Ratlumurle, Choithram School, Intia
6. Iida Nuutinen 3B, Niittylahden koulu, Joensuu
7. "Tridentos King of the Oceans" Vladyslava Kryzhanovska, Kharkiv, Ukraine