

LUCERNE FESTIVAL

Media Release

Lucerne Festival Honors Wolfgang Rihm

In memory of the late Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, conducted by Riccardo Chailly, will perform an excerpt from Rihm's work *Ernster Gesang* at the Festival's Opening.

The special anniversary concert "20 Years of Lucerne Festival Academy" on 18 August will be dedicated to Wolfgang Rihm.

Lucerne, 6 August 2024. The composer and Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy Wolfgang Rihm passed away on 27 July 2024. The Festival mourns the loss of one of the most important artists of our time, whose work and personality left an indelible mark on the program. In his memory, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra will perform an excerpt from Rihm's work *Ernster Gesang* ("Serious Song") on 16 August under the direction of Riccardo Chailly during the Opening Concert of the Summer Festival.

Riccardo Chailly, a long-time companion and friend of Wolfgang Rihm, learned of Rihm's death when he was studying Rihm's *Ernster Gesang*. The work's genesis prompted Chailly to choose it to commemorate Rihm at the Opening Concert. Shortly after the death of his father, Wolfgang Rihm had been closely studying the works of Johannes Brahms, who in turn had composed his *Vier ernste Gesänge* during a period when he was already anticipating his own death. (Brahms would die of cancer the following year.) Inspired by the *Vier ernste Gesänge*, Rihm gave his work the title *Ernster Gesang* in 1996 and dedicated it to the memory of his father as a kind of requiem. This work will be performed in memory of Wolfgang Rihm himself on 16 August, in an abridged version that will precede Gustav Mahler's Seventh Symphony during the second part of the Opening Concert. The Opening Concert is also dedicated to Claudio Abbado, the founder of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, on the 10th anniversary of his death.

Lucerne Festival is also dedicating the special anniversary concert "20 Years of Lucerne Festival Academy", which will take place on 18 August at 3.30 pm, to Wolfgang Rihm. In addition to Rihm's piece for three percussionists, the program of the Memorial Concert includes works by Pierre Boulez, Lisa Streich, Beat Furrer, and Raimonda Žiūkaitė. Soloists from the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) will perform.

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