

Media Release

A New Opening for All of Lucerne: Lucerne Festival Launches Its Summer Festival Over Two Days

13 August: “Overture” in the KKL Concert Hall and “Classical Music for All: Open Air” on Europaplatz

14 August: Official Opening Concert at the KKL Luzern and “Lakeside Symphony” on the Inseli

Lucerne, 7 July 2026. Lucerne Festival Summer 2026 opens this year under the new leadership of Sebastian Nordmann with a new two-day launch: a large-scale pre-opening in and around the KKL Luzern on 13 August, followed by the official Opening Concert of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra on 14 August. With “American Dreams” as its theme, the Festival explores the many sound worlds of America and invites the entire city of Lucerne to a free *Overture* in the KKL Concert Hall on the first evening, featuring the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and Riccardo Chailly. The evening then continues on Europaplatz with “Classical Music for All: Open Air.”

The following day, 14 August, brings the official Opening Concert with Riccardo Chailly and the Festival Orchestra; at the free “Lakeside Symphony” on the Inseli, audiences can enjoy the American program picnic-style in a relaxed atmosphere, while concertgoers inside the KKL Luzern hear the performance in the hall’s outstanding acoustics. Invited guests will begin the evening with a festive reception; Federal President Guy Parmelin is expected to attend, along with numerous VIPs from business, politics, and culture.

On Thursday Evening: Pre-Opening for All on the New Lakeside Stage

On 13 August, the new pre-opening conceived by Sebastian Nordmann marks the start of Switzerland’s largest classical music festival, which will present more than 120 concerts over 32 days. The two new formats – the *Overture* in the KKL Concert Hall and “Classical Music for All: Open Air” outdoors on Europaplatz – offer different ways into the music and extend the Festival experience beyond the traditional symphony concert. A limited number of tickets are still available for the free *Overture* in the KKL Concert Hall. At “Classical Music for All: Open Air,” audiences can hear horn player Sarah Willis and the musicians of the Havana Lyceum Orchestra outdoors on Europaplatz starting at 9.00 p.m., with free admission. The concert will be presented under the motto “A Cuban-Classical Night.”

For the new “Classical Music for All: Open Air,” Lucerne Festival and Luzern Live will use the same lakeside stage. This marks the first collaboration between Lucerne Festival and Luzern Live on the lakeside stage and the structure built out over the lake basin.

On Friday Evening: Opening Concert, “Lakeside Symphony,” and Festive Event

On Friday evening, the Festival will officially open with a concert by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra under the direction of its Music Director, Riccardo Chailly. Following a festive reception for invited VIP guests from business, politics, and culture, which Federal President Guy Parmelin is also expected to attend, the Opening Concert will begin at 6.30 p.m. in the KKL Luzern Concert Hall; the all-American program reflects this year’s Festival theme, “American Dreams,” and features George Gershwin’s *Cuban Overture* and *Concerto in F*, with pianist Frank Dupree, as well as the First Symphony of Charles Ives. In addition, soloists of the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra will perform Steve Reich’s *New York Counterpoint* in a version for eleven clarinets. At the same time, the popular “Lakeside Symphony” returns, with the Opening Concert

LUCERNE FESTIVAL

broadcast live to Lucerne's Inseli, the park where fans of this event gather each year for a relaxed concert picnic.

Highlights of the 2026 Summer Festival from 13 August to 13 September

This summer, leading international soloists and orchestras will once again be at the heart of the concert calendar, with 20 symphony orchestras appearing in just one month. A total of 55 free events will be offered. The Lucerne Festival Orchestra will appear on six evenings as well as in two "Classical Music for All: 40min" events, and the Lucerne Festival Academy will be led for the first time by its new Artistic Director, the composer, clarinetist, and conductor Jörg Widmann. There will also be new discoveries throughout the Festival: for example, innovative concert formats such as "Mittendrin," special programs for children and young people with "Look, Listen, Enjoy," and the newly conceived Lucerne street festival "In the Streets: City Stage." The violinist Augustin Hadelich appears as this year's "artiste étoile" in four concerts, while Mark Andre takes on the role of composer-in-residence.

Sustainability Project "Traumoase" on Europaplatz

A Lucerne Festival sustainability project will return to Europaplatz this summer: from 14 August, the opening day, through the end of the Festival, the "Traumoase" invites visitors to linger and listen. This oasis of sound and nature brings classical music and the natural world together. Covering around 25 square meters, a U-shaped, wheelchair-accessible installation is made up of about 15 raised-bed planters filled with biodiversity-friendly native plants. Visitors can access four nature-related musical excerpts via QR codes. Accompanying texts by Lucerne Festival and Pro Natura Luzern offer musical and nature-related perspectives on the works and invite visitors to discover connections between composition and nature. The four musical selections will be chosen by primary school classes from the Lucerne region as part of the "Traumoase: Hörexpedition" ("Listening Expedition") education workshop. In this way, children in third through sixth grades actively help shape the installation.

Many Lucerne Festival concerts will again be broadcast on television and radio this summer. All broadcast dates are available [online](#).

The press kit, including texts about Lucerne Festival Summer as well as photos, can be found at lucernefestival.ch/en/press.

Summer Festival

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