

Media Release

SUMMER 2026

13 August to 13 September

The Festival at a Glance

The first summer festival under the leadership of Sebastian Nordmann, the new Executive and Artistic Director, will explore the theme “American Dreams,” featuring more than 120 events across 32 days, from 13 August to 13 September. Nordmann’s programming preserves the artistic core of Switzerland’s largest classical music festival while continuing to advance its profile: leading international soloists and orchestras form the basis of the concert calendar, with 20 symphony orchestras appearing within the span of a single month. The Lucerne Festival Orchestra presents six evening concerts as well as two “Classical Music for All: 40min” events. The Lucerne Festival Academy is led for the first time by its new Artistic Director, the composer, clarinetist, and conductor Jörg Widmann. New elements run throughout all areas of the programming, such as the innovative concert format “Mittendrin,” special offers for children and young people through the “Look Listen Enjoy” initiative, and the new event “Classical Music for All: Open Air” on the evening before the official opening. This year’s “artiste étoile” is violinist Augustin Hadelich, who will appear in four concerts, while Mark Andre serves as composer-in-residence.

[Summer Festival: Complete Concert Schedule](#)

“American Dreams”

Through its theme “American Dreams,” Lucerne Festival will explore the rich and varied history of American music, spanning a broad spectrum of stylistic traditions and cultural influences – from musical theater and film music to jazz and minimalism. The Opening Concert on 14 August features works by George Gershwin and Charles Ives, with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra under Music Director Riccardo Chailly; in addition, soloists from the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) perform Steve Reich’s *New York Counterpoint* in a version for eleven clarinets. The Closing Concert on 13 September is devoted to Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, with the Chineke! Orchestra joined by the Cape Town Opera Vocal Ensemble, conducted by Kwamé Ryan. Works by numerous American composers are featured throughout the festival. Several of these are being heard at Lucerne Festival for the first time, such as Charles Ives’s *Symphony No. 1* with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, as well as Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring*, and Samuel Barber’s *Piano Concerto*, which will be performed by Yuja Wang with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Lucerne Festival welcomes Augustin Hadelich, an American by choice and the summer’s “artiste étoile,” alongside many other guests from the “New World,” from young inaugural poet and bestselling author Amanda Gorman and clarinetist Doreen Ketchens to the Met Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

[All Works Related to “American Dreams”](#)

What’s New?

In his first Summer Festival, Sebastian Nordmann introduces a series of new directions that further shape the Festival’s profile and open up new perspectives on the concert experience.

- On 13 August, the evening before the official Opening Concert, Lucerne Festival introduces two new event formats: “Overture” in the KKL Concert Hall and “Classical Music for All: Open Air” under the stars. Offering contrasting approaches to music-making, the two events extend the Festival experience beyond the traditional symphonic concert. “Overture” features the

Lucerne Festival Orchestra in the KKL Concert Hall. Then, starting at 9:00 p.m., “Classical Music for All: Open Air” takes place on the Europaplatz, where audiences can experience horn player Sarah Willis with musicians of the Havana Lyceum Orchestra in an open-air performance. Presented under the shared motto “A Cuban-Classical Night,” both events are free of charge.

[Further Information on “Overture”](#) and [Further Information on “Classical Music for All: Open Air”](#)

- In the immersive concert format **“Mittendrin,”** audience members sit among the musicians on stage as the Budapest Festival Orchestra, led by Iván Fischer, performs a suite from Sergei Prokofiev’s ballet *Cinderella*. This format creates a distinctive atmosphere and offers a fresh perspective on the interaction between orchestra and conductor – an experience usually reserved for the musicians themselves. The popular “Classical Music for All: 40min” format will also continue. [Further Information](#)
- The newly conceived Lucerne street music festival, now called **“In the Streets: City Stage”** and presented in cooperation with guerillaclassics, offers six days of announced performances as well as unexpected pop-up concerts in locations across the city. From 25 to 30 August, young musicians from the Lucerne Festival Academy, joined by additional ensembles, will bring music to the streets of Lucerne, performing as a marching band or in a “Symphonic Jukebox” format. The detailed concert schedule will be available on the [website](#) beginning in April.
- Moving beyond the classical repertoire, the **Hamburg-based techno marching band MEUTE** brings its signature brass-driven techno sound to Lucerne Hall on the festival’s final weekend. The eleven musicians combine the acoustic instruments of a marching band with techno, basing their stage show on newly arranged techno and house tracks by well-known DJs, alongside original material. [Further Information](#)
- The new Flex subscription, **“Fan Zone,”** lets fans of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra select four of their favorite concerts from the orchestra’s six-program lineup and enjoy them up close from the organ loft – all for just CHF 200. [Further Information](#)
- The **“Look Listen Enjoy”** initiative expands the festival’s offer for younger concertgoers. For the first time, audiences can select any concert or recital in the KKL Concert Hall and bring a child or teenager along for just CHF 10. [Further Information](#)

Soloists: Established Stars and Rising Artists

Alongside the internationally renowned artists who return to Lucerne each year, the Summer season also welcomes some of the most sought-after newcomers on today’s classical music scene. In addition to Martha Argerich, Cecilia Bartoli, Isabelle Faust, Víkingur Ólafsson, and Yuja Wang, this summer features soloists appearing at Lucerne Festival for the first time or returning after a long absence, including Ray Chen, Hilary Hahn, Joyce DiDonato, Elisabeth Leonskaja, and Yo-Yo Ma, all performing in the KKL Concert Hall. The cellist Jan Vogler appears together with the American inaugural poet and bestselling author Amanda Gorman. Representing the acclaimed younger generation of soloists in the 2026 Summer edition are pianists Frank Dupree, Seong-Jin Cho, Alexandre Kantorow, Yunchan Lim, Alexander Malofeev, Lukas Sternath, and Hayato Sumino.

The Debut series introduces additional rising talents, including pianists Simon Bürki and Bridget Yee, violinists Yuki Hirano and Elias David Moncado, baritone Jonas Müller, harpist Mared Pugh-Evans, and the Poiesis Quartet.

Anne-Sophie Mutter Marks Her 50th Anniversary

To mark her 50th anniversary on stage, the world-renowned violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter showcases her versatility in a series of concerts at Lucerne Festival. She launched her career there in 1976, appearing at the age of 13, when the festival was still known as the International Music Festival Lucerne. Since then, she has returned regularly and, by the summer of 2026, will have performed a total of 50 concerts in Lucerne. With the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, she appears both as soloist and conductor in three violin concertos by André Previn and Wolfgang Amadé Mozart, and performs a solo work by the Iranian composer Aftab Darvishi. She also joins the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck for Krzysztof Penderecki's Second Violin Concerto. She also introduces four scholarship holders from her foundation and appears with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in the free "Classical Music for All: 40min" concert format. On 23 August, exactly 50 years after her Festival debut, Anne-Sophie Mutter will share personal insights into her life and career in a public conversation with Festival Executive and Artistic Director Sebastian Nordmann. The talk takes place at the same venue where she gave her debut, St. Charles Hall in Meggen.

[Anne-Sophie Mutter: Complete Concert Schedule](#)

The Lucerne Festival Orchestra

On 14 August, under the baton of its Music Director, Riccardo Chailly, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra opens the Festival with a program reflecting the theme "American Dreams" and featuring works by George Gershwin and Charles Ives. The soloist is the pianist Frank Dupree. On the evening prior, Gershwin's *Cuban Overture* and Leonard Bernstein's *Mambo* from *West Side Story* will be presented as part of the "Overture" at the KKL Lucerne. Riccardo Chailly, whose contract as Music Director was recently extended through the end of 2028, also conducts a second program devoted to works by Alexander Scriabin and Sergei Rachmaninoff, with Lukas Sternath as soloist in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 in G minor. Klaus Mäkelä and Jakub Hrůša return to the podium of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. Mäkelä leads Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* alongside Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, Op. 14, with Augustin Hadelich as soloist. Hrůša, in turn, conducts Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Concerto in D major with soloist Ray Chen, followed by Richard Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony*. On the orchestra's final evening, Anne-Sophie Mutter appears as both soloist and musical director (see above). Alongside the symphonic programs, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra also presents a chamber-music evening devoted to works by American composers and featuring the orchestra's brass ensemble and soloists.

[Lucerne Festival Orchestra: Complete Concert Schedule](#) and [Additional Information](#)

This Summer's Orchestras and Additional Symphonic Highlights

Daily appearances by leading international symphony orchestras form the core of Lucerne Festival. Making their first appearance on the stage of the KKL Lucerne are the Konzerthausorchester Berlin with Joana Mallwitz and the Rundfunkchor Berlin, while the Met Orchestra appears in Lucerne for the first time under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. From the United States, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, led by Manfred Honeck, makes a stop in Lucerne as part of its European tour. As they do every season, the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Vienna Philharmonic return to Lucerne. The Berliner Philharmoniker will appear under Kirill Petrenko, the Concertgebouw Orchestra for the first time under Santtu-Matias Rouvali, and the Vienna Philharmonic under Tugan Sokhiev. Lucerne audiences can also look forward to the Budapest Festival Orchestra with Iván Fischer and the Eva Duda Dance Company; the Chineke! Orchestra with Kwamé Ryan; the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra with Sir Simon Rattle; the Havana Lyceum Orchestra with José Antonio Méndez Padrón; the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra with Michael Sanderling; the Mahler Chamber Orchestra with Yuja Wang and Teddy Abrams; the Munich Philharmonic with Lahav Shani;

the Czech Philharmonic with Semyon Bychkov; and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra with Daniel Barenboim.

Opera complements the symphonic program at the KKL Lucerne. In addition to George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* at the Closing Concert, the widely acclaimed project "The Wagner Cycles" reaches its conclusion with *Götterdämmerung*, performed by the Dresden Festival Orchestra and Concerto Köln under the direction of Kent Nagano. Les Musiciens du Prince – Monaco, led by Gianluca Capuano and featuring Cecilia Bartoli, present a concert performance of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

"Artiste étoile" Augustin Hadelich

The violinist Augustin Hadelich appears in four concerts as this summer's "artiste étoile." Over the past several years, he has established himself internationally as one of the leading soloists of his generation and regularly performs with the world's foremost orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the major American orchestras. In the current season, he has been appointed Artist in Residence by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. On his most recent recording, *American Road Trip*, Hadelich explores the spirit of a nation whose musical language ranges from jazz and blues to Romanticism, fiddle music, and the avant-garde. The album aligns closely with this year's festival theme, "American Dreams." Fiddle music can also be heard at Lucerne Festival when Hadelich hosts a Fiddle Night event at the Lucerne Casineum together with the folk musicians Mark O'Connor and Maggie O'Connor. In addition, he performs as soloist with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra under the direction of Klaus Mäkelä in Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto and appears in recital with the pianist Seong-Jin Cho in works by Johannes Brahms, Leoš Janáček, Amy Beach, and Sergei Prokofiev. He also performs Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the Berliner Philharmoniker. Augustin Hadelich made his debut at Lucerne Festival in 1996 at the age of twelve and most recently appeared here in 2025 with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Orchestre de Paris.

["artiste étoile" Augustin Hadelich](#)

[Video: Augustin Hadelich in Conversation with Sebastian Nordmann](#)

The Lucerne Festival Academy Led by Jörg Widmann

This year, the Academy is led for the first time by its new Artistic Director, Jörg Widmann, who will shape the program of his debut season in his capacities as both conductor and clarinetist. As part of the Lucerne Festival Academy, some 120 young musicians once again come together this summer to focus on works of contemporary music. Four conductors will take part in the Contemporary-Conducting Program under the direction of Baldur Brönnimann. Six composers will develop and refine their works with Dieter Ammann and Unsuk Chin in the Composer Seminar, which will focus on large-scale orchestral music going forward. This year's Academy repertoire includes Wolfgang Rihm's monumental *Tutuguri: Poème dansé*, which will also be heard on 2 September in a guest performance at Musikfest Berlin, as well as Frank Zappa's *Yellow Shark*, John Adams's *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, and Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson's *Endangered Dreams*. This year's "Roche Commissions" composition, *Tongue of the Land* by Liza Lim, will receive its world premiere under the direction of Elim Chan.

The Academy concerts will also place a strong focus on works by composer-in-residence Mark Andre. Born in Paris in 1964, Andre combines avant-garde techniques with a spiritually informed exploration of transience and perception in his predominantly quiet, fragile compositions. Alongside his orchestral triptych *Im Entschwinden – Im Entfalten – Im Entsiegeln 1*, the program includes his

Clarinet Concerto, which was written for Jörg Widmann.

Lucerne Festival Academy: Complete Concert Schedule and composer-in-residence Mark Andre

Additional Contemporary Highlights

This year's *räsonanz* – Donor Concert, presented in cooperation with the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, features Hans Werner Henze's *Sinfonia N. 9*. The composer would have celebrated his 100th birthday in 2026. Joana Mallwitz conducts the Konzerthausorchester Berlin and the Rundfunkchor Berlin. This year's collaboration between Lucerne Festival and the Luzerner Theater also focuses on contemporary music. Peter Maxwell Davies's music theater work *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and the world premiere of the opera *Medea's Monolog* by the British composer Bushra El-Turk will be presented on the same evening, 28 August.

Programs for Children and Schools

A central aim of the Festival is to make classical music accessible to younger audiences in a variety of ways and to spark their enthusiasm. A wide-ranging program is aimed at schools in Lucerne: the Berliner Philharmoniker and the Munich Philharmonic will each give a concert for school classes in the KKL Concert Hall; throughout the Festival, school groups are invited to attend symphony concert rehearsals; and four artists from the Debut series will visit schools in Lucerne, offering brief live performances and introducing musical works and instruments. Pupils and students can access significantly discounted tickets through the "Look Listen Enjoy" program (see above under "What's New") and through the offer of tickets at CHF 20 to concerts that are not sold out.

Offers for Children and Families and Offers for Schools

Photos may be downloaded at lucernefestival.ch/en/press/photos

Online ticket sales dates: Online ticket sales for the Summer Festival begin on 24 March 2026 at 10:00 am. Full program details are available on the Festival website.

Partners and Supporters

This year's Summer program is made possible through the support of more than 50 sponsors, foundations, private donors, and around 400 Friends of Lucerne Festival. Without this substantial support, the Festival would not be possible in its current form. We are pleased about the extension of our partnerships with our Main Sponsors Roche and Zurich Insurance, as well as about our current collaboration with the Kühne Foundation and UBS. We are also grateful to have the Family Schwöbel continue their long-standing and generous support as patrons of the Festival.

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