

LUCERNE FESTIVAL

Media Release

2026 Fritz Gerber Award

Double bassist Pietro Elia Barcellona, violinist Benjamin Frueh, and percussionist Bárbara Ribeiro are the recipients of the prestigious award, which is presented as part of the Lucerne Festival Academy.

Lucerne, 19 May 2026. In summer 2026, the Fritz Gerber Foundation and Lucerne Festival will present the Fritz Gerber Award for the twelfth time, honoring three young musicians in the field of contemporary music. This year's recipients are Italian double bassist Pietro Elia Barcellona, Swiss-American violinist Benjamin Frueh, and Portuguese percussionist Bárbara Ribeiro. Each will receive a cash prize of CHF 10,000. In addition, the Foundation will fund their participation in the 2026 Lucerne Festival Academy, which is valued at an additional CHF 10,000 per person.

The Fritz Gerber Award is aimed at young artists who either hold Swiss citizenship or who have lived in Switzerland for at least three years. The winners are selected by a jury comprising Sebastian Nordmann, Executive and Artistic Director of Lucerne Festival; Mark Sattler, Co-Head of Contemporary and Dramaturg at Lucerne Festival; and Jack Adler-McKean, Coaching Program Coordinator of the Lucerne Festival Academy.

"It makes us proud that each year three young musicians have the opportunity to take part in the Lucerne Festival Academy through the Fritz Gerber Award," says Sebastian Nordmann. "Like Lucerne Festival, the Fritz Gerber Foundation invests in a new generation of highly accomplished artists committed to the music of today. All three prizewinners impressed us with their artistic excellence, their understanding of contemporary music, and their stage presence."

Born in Italy in 1997, **Pietro Elia Barcellona** is a double bassist, composer, and improviser whose work focuses on contemporary and experimental music. Moving between composed and improvised music, his practice explores their interplay as well as questions of physicality, time, and listening. He has collaborated with composers such as Beat Furrer and Helmut Lachenmann and has appeared at major festivals including ManiFeste in Paris and the Gaudeamus Muziekweek in Utrecht. He performs regularly with ensembles such as Askol|Schönberg and Collegium Novum Zürich. As a soloist, he received the 2025 Kranichstein Music Prize at the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music. He studied in Amsterdam and Basel, specializing in contemporary music, and is currently pursuing further master's studies in Open Creation as well as a doctorate in improvisation.

Violinist **Benjamin Frueh** was born in Columbia, South Carolina, in 2005 and holds both American and Swiss citizenship. He currently lives in Appleton, Wisconsin, where he is in his third year at the Lawrence Conservatory of Music, studying with Samantha George. He has long worked closely with his brother, pianist Kai Frueh; together they have performed in the United States and Switzerland and released an album of works written especially for them. He has gained orchestral experience under the direction of Carlos Miguel Prieto and Daniel Harding with the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America. Frueh is currently recording a program of clarinet trios at the Lawrence Conservatory with Isaac Epley and Isabelle Olsen, including a commissioned work by Zachary Good.

Portuguese percussionist **Bárbara Ribeiro**, 23, focuses on contemporary and improvised music in both solo and chamber settings. She has performed in major concert halls across Europe and at festivals including the Darmstadt Summer Course and Murten Classics. She collaborates with ensembles such as Collegium Novum Zürich and is a member of the trio zKzAk. Ribeiro has received numerous awards, including the 2025 Kiefer Hablitzel | Göhner Music Prize, First Prize at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) Competition for the Interpretation of Contemporary Music in 2024, and Second Prize at the

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Italy PAS International Marimba Competition in 2022. She completed her bachelor's degree at ZHdK, studying with Klaus Schwärzler, Raphael Christen, and Benjamin Forster, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in music education.

About the Fritz Gerber Foundation

The Fritz Gerber Foundation for talented young people has supported emerging talent in the fields of culture, crafts, and sport since 1999. Over the past 27 years, the foundation has supported more than 2,900 individuals residing in Switzerland, investing over CHF 35 million to date. The Fritz Gerber Award has been presented in collaboration with Lucerne Festival since 2015.

About the Lucerne Festival Academy

The Lucerne Festival Academy is a leading training ground for contemporary music. Each summer, more than 100 young musicians from around the world take part in an intensive program dedicated to the repertoire of the 20th and 21st centuries. Through rehearsals and workshops, they engage with key works of modern music, develop new scores, and explore innovative performance formats.

The Academy was founded in 2004 by Pierre Boulez and Michael Haefliger and has since become a unique international platform for contemporary music. Following the death of Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann has served as Artistic Director since 2026. The program culminates in performances by the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO), both in symphonic formation and in chamber ensembles. The Academy is open to instrumentalists, conductors, and composers alike. The Contemporary-Conducting Program offers hands-on experience on the podium, while the Composer Seminar and the "Roche Young Commissions" support the development and first performances of new works. In early September, the LFCO appears as a guest ensemble in Berlin and Munich.

For more information, visit lucernefestival.ch/en/lucerne-festival-academy/fritz-gerber-award or fritz-gerber-stiftung.ch.

Photos available at lucernefestival.ch/en/press/photos

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