

Media Release

Lucerne Festival Forward 2026: Echoes of Schumann

The Forward Festival of Contemporary Music will now be curated by Jörg Widmann. It explores connections between classical composers, their works, and the present day – in the 2026 program, specifically through contemporary works that respond and relate to Robert Schumann.

Lucerne, 25 June 2026. Under Sebastian Nordmann's directorship, the Forward contemporary music festival continues to evolve: Jörg Widmann, the Lucerne Festival Academy's new Artistic Director, will shape the program of the fall festival as curator. Forward has been held annually since 2021 and in 2026 will take place from 20 to 22 November. The musicians of the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) remain at the core, but now within the framework of a new concept. The idea is to explore connections to the music of a classical composer and how that music "echoes" in the present day.

In 2026, the focus will be on Robert Schumann. His works will be heard alongside immediate musical responses by leading composers of our time – Heinz Holliger, Christian Jost, György Kurtág, Aribert Reimann, and Jörg Widmann himself. The performers are renowned musicians from different generations: Matthias Goerne, Fatma Said, Sir András Schiff, Johanna Summer, Antoine Tamestit, Heinz Holliger, and Jörg Widmann, who will appear both as conductor and as clarinetist. The concerts, all titled "Schumannliebe," connect past and present. On Sunday, 22 November, Widmann will illustrate the modernity of Robert Schumann's music in a lecture at the piano.

"It poses the questions: where do we come from and where are we headed? Is the music of the past still relevant to us? How do we, as people living today, respond to what already exists?" explains curator Jörg Widmann, outlining the core of the new Forward concept. Sebastian Nordmann comments: "Contemporary music today needs to feel approachable and to engage with audiences. Jörg Widmann is the ideal mediator to ignite that spark."

The festival presents a total of five concerts over three days, during the course of a long weekend. The first concert will take place at a new venue, the KKV Chamber Music Hall in Vitznau. On Saturday and Sunday, the concerts will be held in the KKL Lucerne Concert Hall. For the first time at Forward, the LFCO will appear with large orchestral forces.

The five concerts focus on musical connections to Schumann's *Märchenerzählungen*, *Märchenbilder*, *Dichterliebe*, and *Nachtlied* for choir and orchestra. Why does Schumann's music resonate so strongly today? "I think it has to do with the fractured, torn quality of his music: one moment ecstatic, the next plunged into despair. I also sensed this in my conversations with Kurtág, Holliger, and Jost, all of whom have spent their lives engaging with Schumann."

The complete festival program and further information can be found online at lucernefestival.ch. Advance ticket sales begin on 4 August 2026 at 10:00 a.m. Swiss time.

Photo downloads are available at lucernefestival.ch/en/press/photos.

Partners – Carla Schwöbel-Braun | John and Patricia B. Ziel |
Stiftung Melinda Esterházy de Galantha | Walter B. Kielholz Foundation

Contact for Press and Public Relations

Nina Steinhart, Press Spokesperson | n.steinhart@lucernefestival.ch | T +41 (0)41 226 44 43
www.lucernefestival.ch