

Media Release

Composer, clarinetist, and conductor Jörg Widmann will receive the 14th composition commission of the “Roche Commissions” series for 2028.

The work commissioned for 2026, “Tongue of the Land” by Liza Lim, will receive its world premiere today, 29 August, as part of the Summer Festival, in a performance by the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) under the direction of Peter Rundel.

Lucerne, 29 August 2026. Two years after the commission was awarded to Liza Lim, her work *Tongue of the Land* will premiere this evening as part of Lucerne Festival Summer – the 13th composition in the “Roche Commissions” series. The conductor Peter Rundel, who has developed the work together with Liza Lim, trumpeter Marco Blaauw, and the musicians of the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO), will be on the podium. This concert is among the highlights of this year’s Lucerne Festival Academy program.

Australian composer Liza Lim wrote *Tongue of the Land* for orchestra and an unusual solo instrument: the ancient Celtic carnyx, which was used in Central Switzerland more than 2,000 years ago and which has only recently been rediscovered and reconstructed. It will be played in today’s premiere by Marco Blaauw. Lim explains that the carnyx opens up experiential spaces beyond linear concepts of time and invites a form of listening that moves both backward and forward. It creates a sonic world in which the instrument emerges as a kind of “ancestral voice” – a resonant body between times and beings. In this perspective, music becomes an act of connection: a listening, calling, and responding – a speaking and singing with the *Tongue of the Land*.

The next commission, the 2028 “Roche Commissions,” has been awarded to German composer Jörg Widmann, one of the most versatile artists of his generation and among the most sought-after of contemporary composers. Since January 2026, he has also served as Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy.

Born in Munich in 1973, Jörg Widmann initially studied clarinet before turning to composition with Kay Westermann, Wilfried Hiller, Hans Werner Henze, Heiner Goebbels, and Wolfgang Rihm. His works are premiered and regularly performed by leading international orchestras, including the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras, the New York Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Cleveland Orchestra. Conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Kent Nagano, Christian Thielemann, Sir Simon Rattle, and Andris Nelsons perform his music around the world.

In the 2026-27 season, Widmann will take on a dual role with the Staatskapelle Dresden: for the first time in the orchestra’s history, a single artist will serve simultaneously as Capell-Compositeur and Capell-Virtuos. In the 2023-24 season, he was composer-in-residence with the Berliner Philharmoniker. He continues to expand his work as a conductor and has appeared with numerous international orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra and the Berliner Philharmoniker. He is also Principal Guest Conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie, Associated Conductor of the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and Artistic Partner of Sinfonietta Riga.

Alongside his work as a composer and conductor, Widmann performs as a clarinetist with partners including Daniel Barenboim, Tabea Zimmermann, Sir András Schiff, and Hélène Grimaud; several works have been dedicated to him. He taught in Freiburg from 2001 to 2015 and has been teaching

composition at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin since 2017. Widmann has received numerous awards and was elected to the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in 2024.

About the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO)

The Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) was founded in 2021 as a counterpart to the Lucerne Festival Orchestra: an ensemble of excellence dedicated to the performance of contemporary music. It brings together current and former participants of the Lucerne Festival Academy. Over the past 20 years, the Academy has built an international network of more than 1,500 instrumentalists, conductors, and composers. The orchestra reflects Lucerne Festival's longstanding commitment to contemporary music, with a repertoire ranging from the threshold of early modernism to works of the present day. In both large and smaller formations, the LFCO performs concerts as part of the Academy during the Summer Festival and also appears in guest engagements outside the Festival, including at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg in 2023 and the Mizmorim Festival in Basel in 2024. In September 2026, it will perform at Musikfest Berlin at the Philharmonie and in Munich as part of the Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation's Musica Viva series at the Isarphilharmonie. In Lucerne, the LFCO is also the resident orchestra of Lucerne Festival Forward, the festival for contemporary music.

About the Lucerne Festival Academy

The Lucerne Festival Academy was founded in 2004 by Pierre Boulez and Festival Executive and Artistic Director Michael Haefliger as a training ground for contemporary music. Composer Wolfgang Rihm served as Artistic Director beginning in 2016. The Academy is open to instrumentalists, conductors, and composers: each summer, more than 100 young musicians from some 30 nations spend three weeks engaging intensively with the repertoire of the 20th and 21st centuries. Between 1999 and 2025, more than 400 world premieres were presented at Lucerne Festival. In 2026, an additional 12 new works will be performed during the Summer Festival, nine of them as part of the Lucerne Festival Academy concerts.

About "Roche Commissions"

"Roche Commissions" is a unique collaboration between Roche, Lucerne Festival and its Lucerne Festival Academy. Since 2003, Roche biannually commissions a new work from a renowned contemporary composer, on the recommendation of the Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy. Rather than commissioning works that will cater to mainstream fashions or focusing on current popular appeal, "Roche Commissions" aims to enable musical works which venture beyond the conventional and which provide a source of intellectual stimulation and challenge. The composer interacts with several leading Roche scientists and after two years the commissioned work is premiered at Lucerne Festival in summer. The roots of this groundbreaking initiative stem from a partnership between Roche, the Cleveland Orchestra and Carnegie Hall which is now continued by the unique collaboration between Roche, Lucerne Festival and Lucerne Festival Academy. Additionally, the "Roche Young Commissions" was established for the first time in 2013 to give two young composers under the age of 30 the opportunity to write orchestral works every other year alternating with "Roche Commissions".

About Roche

Roche supports groundbreaking contemporary art, cultural projects and activities that explore the parallels between innovation in art and in science. The focus is on music, while also supporting the visual arts and architecture. The aim is to foster and cultivate intensive interactions with contemporary music and art as a means to express Roche's commitment to innovation characterized by excellence, distinctiveness and passion.

Roche was founded in Basel, Switzerland in 1896 and today is a leading provider of transformative medicines and diagnostics for millions of people in over 150 countries around the world. It is dedicated to tackling healthcare challenges that place the greatest strain on patients, families, communities and healthcare systems. Across its Diagnostics and Pharmaceutical divisions, Roche focuses on areas including oncology, neurology, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, ophthalmology, infectious diseases and immunology with the aim of providing real and positive change for patients, the people they love and the professionals who care for them.

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

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