LUCERNE FESTIVAL

Media Release

Lucerne Festival Pulse 2027: “Spirit & Matter”

From 6 to 9 May, Víkingur Ólafsson explores the interplay of spirit and matter for his second edition of Pulse – with music from Johann Sebastian Bach to Philip Glass

Lucerne, 11 November 2026. Pianist and curator Víkingur Ólafsson unveils “Spirit & Matter” as the theme of the second edition of Lucerne Festival Pulse. Alongside some of today’s most renowned artists, he will present great musical works in a new context, merging the worlds of the mundane and the metaphysical, physics and poetry, life and death. The Pulse Festival explores the spiritual dimension of music and how it extends far beyond what we simply hear.

Taking place in Lucerne from 6 to 9 May 2027, the Festival will feature Ólafsson in a variety of roles in addition to curator: in a solo recital, as chamber musician and in his play-directing debut with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. As well as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, global stars include cellist Alisa Weilerstein, pianist and composer Joep Beving, guitarist Sean Shibe and soprano Álfheiður Erla Guðmundsdóttir. Minimalism is a particular focus. In works by Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams, the program marks milestone birthdays for all three American composers during the 2026–27 season: Reich and Glass turn 90, while Adams turns 80.

The Festival opens on Thursday, 6 May, with a solo recital by Víkingur Ólafsson featuring music by Rameau, Debussy, and Glass in the KKL Luzern Concert Hall. On Friday, he joins Icelandic soprano Álfheiður Erla Guðmundsdóttir and soloists from the Mahler Chamber Orchestra for a Nordic-infused song recital, featuring arrangements of Icelandic folk songs alongside works by Sibelius, Duparc, Chausson, Grieg, Ravel and Richard Strauss. On Saturday afternoon, guitarist Sean Shibe appears at the Chamber Music Hall KKV in Vitznau to unravel the evolutionary history of his instrument. Performing on acoustic and electric guitar, he will present music from the Spanish Renaissance as well as works by Joaquín Rodrigo, Francisco Coll, Olivier Messiaen, Steve Reich, and Meredith Monk. That same evening, Alisa Weilerstein will perform all six of Johann Sebastian Bach’s monumental and transcendent suites for solo cello at the KKL Luzern. Afterwards, Dutch pianist and composer Joep Beving will present 15 piano pieces from his latest album *Liminal*, exploring the symbiosis between humanity and nature. For the finale on Sunday, 9 May, Ólafsson will play-direct the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in Bach’s Piano Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052, and Brahms’ First Piano Concerto. The concert opens with John Adams’s *Shaker Loops.*

“Music is the true medium by which we cross boundaries between the material and spiritual worlds,” says Víkingur Ólafsson. “Through music we are exalted from earth to the heavens. We escape the concrete and enter into a world of pure ideas and ethereal sensations. As such, music offers a unique way to explore the perennial mystery of human consciousness. At Lucerne Festival Pulse 2027, I am thrilled to present four extraordinary soloists, as well as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, to explore this fascinating topic with me.”

Advance ticket sales for Pulse begin on 24 November 2026 at 10.00 am. Detailed programs are now available on the Festival website.

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

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