



Talent of two young violinists rewarded at the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad festival

Anna Egholm

Winner of the Prix Thierry Scherz

Sponsored by the Fondation Pro Scientia et Arte and by
The Friends of the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad

and

Mairéad Hickey

Winner of the Prix André Hoffmann

GSTAAD, 7 February 2022 – The 22nd Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad festival has just drawn to a close. Danish violinist Anna Egholm (25) has been named winner of the Prix Thierry Scherz. This prize is sponsored by the Fondation Pro Scientia et Arte and the Friends of the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad. The Prix André Hoffmann has been awarded to 25-year-old Irish violinist Mairéad Hickey.

Both prizewinners performed at the chapel of Gstaad as part of the 'Young Talent' series on 5 February and 29 January respectively. This warrants a mention considering that the young talents who were due to perform in 2021 were not able to do so because of the pandemic. The festival was delighted to include them in this year's programme.

Prix Thierry Scherz awarded to Anna Egholm

The **Prix Thierry Scherz** is awarded for the best performance in the 'Young Talent' series. The winner gets the opportunity to record his or her first CD with an orchestra. This year, the jury included Renaud Capuçon (chairman), French violinist Guillaume Sutre, who also mentored the young hopefuls, violist Gérard Caussé, and Patrick Peikert, manager of the Claves Records label. The jury awarded the Prix Thierry Scherz to this talented young Danish violinist, a former student at the Haute école de musique (HEMU) in Lausanne, who won over the jury with her performance of works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Ravel. Egholm will record a CD with an orchestra on the Claves Records label in the second half of the year. Claves Records will also promote the recording. The last winner of this prize was the French pianist Jean-Paul Gasparian, whose CD of works by Rachmaninov and Babadjanian, recorded with the Bern Symphony Orchestra and conductor Stefan Blunier, will be released on 25 March 2022.

The **Prix André Hoffmann** seeks to bring contemporary classical music to a wider audience. Every year, a contemporary composer writes a piece for the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad, which is then performed by the musicians in the 'Young Talent' series over the course of the festival. The Fondation André Hoffmann provides funding for the commissioned piece, which is then performed for the first time in Gstaad, and for the residence of the composer. This year, the composer in residence was Wolfgang Rihm and his composition for the festival was entitled *Episode*. **Mairéad Hickey** has been awarded the prize, which is endowed with 5,000 Swiss francs, for the best performance of this new work.

A much anticipated return

After a long and difficult 18 months without live concerts, during which the 21st festival was streamed live online (albeit without live audiences), the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad festival is both grateful and delighted to have been able to organise a 'normal' festival, the 22nd in its history, which took place from 28 January to 5 February. The joy was even greater considering that so many events are being cancelled throughout Europe right now. The delight felt by audience members at being able to meet in a concert hall, to see familiar faces once again, and to share unique musical concerts was both visible and palpable every day. What a joy it was to be able to once again enjoy artists performing in the marvellous acoustics of the church in Rougemont, in the woody warmth of the church in Saanen, and in the cosy intimacy of the chapel in Gstaad. Knowledgeable music lovers and new enthusiasts alike attended the concerts in large numbers (approximately 3,700 people in total).

Concerts, dinners, and one cancellation

This year's Sunday concert was dedicated to the music of Bach and featured violinist Guillaume Sutre, who also mentored the young performers. Held in the church in Rougemont on 30 January, entry was free of charge. The Sunday concert, which was introduced to the festival by Renaud Capuçon in 2020, will remain a fixture of the festival programme in years to come. Sadly, the free concert for children, *Des malheurs de Sophie* ('*Sophie's Misfortunes*'), based on the eponymous novel by the Countess of Ségur, which was due to be narrated by Agnès Jaoui with music by Robert Schumann performed by Claire-Marie Le Guay on Monday, 31 January, had to be cancelled for the safety of vulnerable children. Thankfully, the dinners under the patronage of the festival's sponsors and the Friends of the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad were able to take place in the exquisite and ornate surroundings of the Gstaad Palace.

Memorable concerts

One of the highlights of the festival was undoubtedly the opening concert, which was of particular significance this year because it saw Renaud Capuçon conducting the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne (OCL, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra), a position he took up only this season. Renaud Capuçon put together a rare and fascinating programme that included a work by Chevalier de Saint-Georges in Saanen on 28 January. Among others, the mystical atmosphere of the concert by the excellent English pianist Stephen Hough in Rougemont on 29 January, the return of Gidon Kremer with a splendid programme of brilliantly interpreted Baltic pieces in Saanen on 1 February, and the inspired duo of Emmanuel Pahud and Benjamin Alard in Rougemont on 2 February will remain in people's memories for a long time to come. Two outstanding concerts in Saanen – Maria João Pires and Renaud Capuçon on 3 February; Juan Diego Flores and Vincenzo Scalerà the day after – received lengthy ovations from absolutely enchanted audiences. The virtuoso concert by the Ensemble Matheus (conductor: Jean-Christophe Spinosi) proved a brilliant choice to close the festival.

The Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, whose unique selling points include consistent excellence, support for young musicians, and the intimate rapport between artists and audiences that emerges in the glorious surroundings of these magnificent church buildings, have once more comprehensively delivered in terms of quality, shared experiences and cultural communication.

The 23rd Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad festival will take place from 27 January to 4 February 2023. The featured instrument will be the cello.

HD illustrations and biographies of the prizewinners of the 2022 festival can be downloaded here: <http://www.sommetsmusicaux.ch/presse/> in the sections Biographies & images (Biographies & images) and Concert photos 2022

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