



Press release

The 23rd Festival of the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad from 27 January to 4 February 2023

The cello as theme of the festival

A celebration of Mozart on the anniversary of his birth, young stars at the top of the billing, a rendezvous with cellist Steven Isserlis and Mexican composer Diana Syrse in residence

Three concert cycles in three outstanding venues

Chapel of Gstaad: discovering young talent across seven concerts

Church of Saanen: the stars of the Festival, with five concerts and one musical story for children

Church of Rougemont: five concerts featuring the artistic director's personal favourites

GSTAAD, 26 September 2022 – The Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad and their artistic director Renaud Capuçon present the musical programme of their 23rd edition. From 27 January to 4 February 2023, music-lovers will gather in the chapel of Gstaad and the churches of Saanen and Rougemont. In the spirit of the Festival's aims, which it has promoted since its inception in 2001, audiences at the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad will be able to hear outstanding young talent as well as internationally renowned virtuosos over the course of nine days.

Renaud Capuçon will be showcasing Mozart in three of the Festival's flagship concerts scheduled in the church of Saanen, including the opening and closing concerts, with programmes including a Violin Concerto, two Piano Quartets, a Duo for violin and viola and the famous Overture to *Don Giovanni*. The Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad are delighted, in their 23rd year, to welcome **Alexandre Kantorow, Lucie Horsch, Olga Paschenko, David Fray, Peter Mattei, Gérard Caussé, Nora Gubisch, Alain Altinoglu, the Camerata Salzburg, the International Menuhin Music Academy with Anastasia Kobekina** and many more. For the first time, in the church of Rougemont, a concert for trumpet and organ will be given by **David Guerrier** and **Kit Armstrong**. **Steven Isserlis** will bring the festival to a close with a concert featuring the **Orchestre Consuelo** conducted by **Victor Julien-Laferrrière**. We are happy to present, once again, the traditional musical story for children in a morning concert at the church of Saanen with **Claire-Marue Le Guay** and **Élodie Fondacci**.

The cello, and the promotion of young talent, will be a particular focus for the duration of the festival, with recitals every afternoon in the chapel of Gstaad, where the young cellists, all in contention for the Prix Thierry Scherz and the Prix André Hoffmann, look forward to welcoming audiences for their concerts, which will take place at 4pm. What's more, the festival's closing concert in the church of Saanen will feature British cellist Steven Isserlis –

who will also take on the role of mentor to the young cellists, with Haydn's Concerto no.2 in D major.

Renaud Capuçon has once again devised his programme with the aim of building bridges between new generations and established musicians of renown. We are pleased to welcome Mexican composer **Diana Syrse** as our composer in residence for the duration of the festival. Her work for cello and piano **Black Fire**, written for the Festival, will receive its world premiere(s!) every afternoon at 4pm by the young musicians specially invited to the festival.

Concerts at the Chapel of Gstaad

The famous British cellist Steven Isserlis, the festival's mentor to the rising stars, will be offering guidance to the seven young promising musicians who will perform every afternoon in the chapel of Gstaad. They will have the honour of giving the first ever performances of 'Black Fire', composed specially for the Festival by the talented Mexican composer Diana Syrse.

Steven Isserlis, mentor to the rising stars

Renowned throughout the world for his flawless technique and the profundity of his playing, Steven Isserlis has a variety of artistic 'hats': soloist, chamber musician, teacher, author and broadcaster. He has played with many iconic orchestras, from chamber ensembles to major symphony orchestras, and is equally at home with modern and period instruments, making a point of giving world premieres of contemporary works all over the world. Inspired by the idea of sharing cultural ideas as widely as possible, he has created innovative concepts for concerts, with themes such as composers' shared inspirations and their muses, the links between the cello and the human voice, and commemorations of the First and Second World Wars. He has won numerous awards, including the Robert Schumann Prize of the City of Zwickau, the Piatigorsky Award, the Maestro Foundation Genius Grant in the United States, the Glashütte Original Music Festival Award in Germany, the Armenian Ministry of Culture's Gold Medal and the Wigmore Medal, and has been made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE). Since 1997, Steven Isserlis has been artistic director of the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove in Cornwall. He plays the Marquis de Corberon Stradivarius of 1726, on loan from the Royal Academy of Music.

Diana Syrse, composer in residence

A composer and singer, Diana Syrse Values Rosado is originally from Mexico. She studied voice and composition at the Faculty of Music at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM), she received a master's degree in composition and performance at the California Institute of the Arts (CALARTS) in the United States, a second master's degree at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Music in Munich, Germany and is currently completing a doctorate at the University of Birmingham (UK) with Daria Kwiatkowska and Scott Wilson. Diana Syrse's Music is characterized by a blend of sounds that create an energy that serves the dramatic aspect of a text or concept. It combines acoustic instruments with electronics and sometimes uses her own voice or pre-Hispanic instruments to create new sonic urban landscapes. As an artist, she is attracted by current social issues such as migration, feminism and diversity, as well as by the story of her own day-to-day musical career. She has been recognized by a range of prizes and awards including the Music Prize of the City of Munich (Musikpreis der Landeshauptstadt München), the Los Angeles Project *Counterpoint of tolerance* (United States) and the FONCA scholarship (National Endowment for Culture and Arts, Mexico) for studies abroad. She has also been selected for residencies at the Banff Centre in Canada (supported by FONCA), at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris and at the Deutsches Zentrum in Venice by the German Ministry of Culture.

The concerts

The young cellists, alongside their partners on the piano, will be performing works by a wide range of composers: Beethoven, Britten, Syrse, Poulenc, Schumann, Franck, Martinů, Wallen, Saint-Saëns, Schnittke, Brahms, Abel, Carter, Widor, Kodály, Sarasate, Vivaldi, Rachmaninov, Debussy and Mendelssohn – a range of works that Renaud Capuçon has been at pains to make as varied and diverse as possible.

The Venezuelan-American pianist **Edward Luengo** completed his studies at the Kronberg Academy. He will be accompanied on 28 January by American-Hungarian pianist Julia Hamos, who has studied with such luminaries as Sir Andrés Schiff and Daniel Barenboim. A

winner of numerous awards, including the Queen Elisabeth Competition, Belgian cellist **Stéphanie Huang** will appear with Turkish pianist Salih Can Gevrek, pupil of András Schiff and artist in residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel. On 30 January, the chapel of Gstaad will host the American multiple award-winning cellist and student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland **Madelyn Kowalski** and her pianist partner, American Anna Han, graduate of the Juilliard School and the Royal Academy of Music in London. On 31 January, it will be the turn of Estonian cellist **Marcel Johannes Kits**, winner of numerous prizes and a finalist in the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition, and his compatriot Sten Heinoja, also the recipient of many awards. The 1 February will see the French cellist **Maxime Quennesson**, a former pupil of the Académie Jaroussky, a co-founder of the Trio Zeliha and student at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel performing alongside Cuban pianist Jorge González Bujasán, a finalist in the world-renowned Clara Haskil International Competition. On 2 February we are delighted to hear German cellist **Sebastian Fritsch**, also a multi-award-winner and a former pupil of Jean-Guihen Queyras, and his partner the seasoned Japanese pianist Naoko Sonoda, who holds positions at the Berlin University of the Arts, the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin and the Franz Liszt Musikhochschule in Weimar. The final concert of the series will be given by cellist **Tim Posner**, a former student at London's Royal Academy of Music and notable recitalist and chamber musician, and Greek-German pianist Kiveli Dörken, also a winner of numerous prizes and co-founder of the Molyvos International Music Festival festival on the Greek island of Lesbos.

All these talented young musicians will be in contention for the festival's two awards, the Prix Thierry Scherz and the Prix André Hoffmann.

The transmission of knowledge is a key theme for Renaud Capuçon, and the young musicians – who are true guests in their own right, not simply contestants – will take part in all the activities organized during the festival. They will each arrive the day before their recital and will receive hour-long masterclasses with both Diana Syrse and Steven Isserlis before their concert in the afternoon.

Two prestigious awards: the Prix Thierry Scherz and the Prix André Hoffmann

The Prix Thierry Scherz is sponsored by the Fondation Pro Scientia et Arte and the association of Friends of the Festival ('les Amis du Festival'). It represents an opportunity to recognize one young cello virtuoso and offer them encouragement by giving them the chance to record a debut CD with orchestra for the Claves Records SA label.

The Prix André Hoffmann is endowed with 5000 Swiss francs and will be awarded for the best interpretation of Diana Syrse's work. It also provides the support enabling the Festival to host the composer in residence.

Concerts at the church of Saanen

The stars of the festival

The church of Saanen will be filled with the sounds of works by Mozart, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, J.C. Bach, Haydn and Beethoven, performed by a host of star musicians who will ensure that the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad are *the* unmissable musical event of early 2023.

As mentioned, on 27 January, the church of Saanen will host the festival's curtain-raiser, a concert devoted to Mozart on the anniversary of his birth. **Renaud Capuçon, Paul Zientara, Stéphanie Huang and Guillaume Bellon** will mark the great composer's birthday with a bumper programme, this opening concert featuring the Piano Quartet no.1 in G minor K478, the Duo for violin and viola no.1 in G major K423 and the Piano Quartet no.2 in E flat major K493. Schubert's devastating *Winterreise* will take us to a different plane on 28 January, performed by baritone **Peter Mattei** and pianist **David Fray**. On 31 January, the winner of 2018's Prix Thierry Scherz, the prolific concert artist **Anastasia Kobekina** will be playing alongside the **Menuhin Academy**, a legendary academy founded by Yehudi Menuhin now with Renaud Capuçon as director, in a programme of Schubert (Arpeggione Sonata D821) and Tchaikovsky (*Souvenir de Florence* op.70). Two major orchestral concerts will bring the Sommets Musicaux to a close on 3 and 4 February. Renaud Capuçon returns to an orchestra he knows well as a soloist; the **Camerata Salzburg** is one of the world's finest chamber orchestras. Conducted by **Gregory Ahss**, the orchestra presents Johann Christian Bach's Symphony op.3 no.6 in G major and Mozart's Symphony no.20 in D major K133. Renaud

Capuçon will play Mozart's Violin Concerto no.3 in G major K216. Cellist in residence **Steven Isserlis** can be heard with the **Orchestre Consuelo**, conducted by its director and founder **Victor-Julien Laferrrière** in a programme of Mozart (Overture to *Don Giovanni*), Haydn (Cello Concerto no.2 in D major) and Beethoven (Symphony no.4 in B flat major op.60) on 4 February.

This year, in the church of Saanen, the Festival will be offering a special concert for local children: 'Des malheurs de Sophie' on 31 January at 10am.

Des malheurs de Sophie ('Sophie's Misfortunes'), a seminal work of children's literature, after the Countess of Ségur, with a text by Anais Vaugelade and set to music by Robert Schumann, was to have been performed in 2021, but for reasons relating to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the performance was postponed to 2022. The festival is pleased to finally be able to welcome young schoolchildren from the nearby area. This will be another highlight of the Festival, starring French journalist, commentator and musical storyteller **Élodie Fondacci** as narrator and a French pianist well versed in this genre, **Claire-Marie Le Guay**.

Concerts in the church of Rougemont

The artistic director's 'coups de cœur': five concerts in 2023

The Romanesque church in Rougemont will play host to the 'coups de cœur', the personal favourites, of the festival's artistic director. There will be five spectacular concerts on 29 and 30 January and 1 and 2 February 2023. The series will be opened on 29 February by brilliant rising star **Lucie Horsch**, who emerged as a child prodigy on the recorder and has become a Baroque virtuoso of consummate style and elegance, and **Olga Pashchenko**, one of the most versatile keyboardists currently operating on the international stage. The two young women will present a programme of Bach and Telemann, which perfectly showcase the two instruments in their capacity as soloists. On the evening of 29 January, the Festival will host the 'young tsar of the piano' **Alexandre Kantorow**, gold medallist at the International Tchaikovsky Competition and now in vast demand all over the world, in a classic programme of Brahms and Schubert (the 'Wanderer' Fantasy). On 30 January, Renaud Capuçon's 'spiritual brother', the outstanding viola player **Gérard Caussé** will be in excellent company with **Nora Gubisch**, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres and one of the most sought-after mezzo-sopranos of her generation, and pianist **Alain Altinoglu**, chief conductor of the hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt (Frankfurt Radio Symphony) and music director of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Audiences will have the opportunity to hear a rare lieder programme, with songs by Brahms and Schumann. An ensemble of remarkable young musicians will sprinkle some stardust on a programme of Baroque music on 1 February: harpsichordist **Justin Taylor**, violinists **Théotime Langlois de Swarte** and **Sophie de Bardonnèche** and cellist **Hanna Salzenstein** make up Le Consort. Another brilliant young artist will feature on the Sommets Musicaux programme on 2 February, with the prodigious American pianist **Kit Armstrong**, also a mathematician and polyglot. Renaud Capuçon once described him in an interview as having 'a talent of the purest kind'. Armstrong and French trumpeter **David Guerrier**, himself recipient of numerous honours, will present an unexpected programme combining Baroque and contemporary music.

A true winter rendezvous

The festival will feature a total of 18 concerts from 27 January to 4 February 2023. The Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, it should be added, are one of the few festivals in Switzerland whose concerts take place exclusively in churches – to the delight of music-lovers who particularly value the unique magic and intimate atmosphere of this event.

The Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, a bona fide winter rendezvous in the region and the first classical music festival of the year, have a tradition of organizing dinners in the Gstaad Palace after the concerts in Saanen, thus providing a rare opportunity for a music-loving audience to meet the artists. This is thanks to the patronage of a variety of active partners – whether individual sponsors, business ventures, foundations and associations – including Vera Michalski-Hoffmann, president of the Festival, Aline Foriel-Destezet, Les Amis des Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, the Fondation Hoffmann, the Fondation Pro Scientia et Arte, the municipality of Saanen and surrounding towns, the canton of Bern and the Loterie Romande, to name only a few. These special events will, at last, be able to take place once again in 2023.

Association of the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad

President: Vera Michalski-Hoffmann
Director: Ombretta Ravessoud
Artistic director: Renaud Capuçon

Programme, tickets and advance sales

www.sommets-musicaux.ch

Tickets will be on sale at the Gstaad tourist office, at ticketcorner.ch and at the box office in the evening. Ticket sales opened on 13 September 2022. Reservations can be made at:

- Gstaad tourist office: +41 33 748 81 82 ticketing@gstaad.ch

Ticket prices per concert: between CHF 30 and CHF 150 (Swiss francs), depending on the category and the venue

Young persons' rate ('Jeunesse', for those aged between 5 and 25): 50% discount

Locals' rates ('Indigènes'): 10% discount

The concert on 29 January at the church of Rougemont at 11am is free of charge

The concert for children on 31 January at the church of Saanen, 'Des malheurs de Sophie' at 10am is free of charge

A brief look at the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad

From its inception in 2001, the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad has been hailed as the ultimate reference point in winter festivals, an event to delight all aficionados of classical music. Every year young talented musicians, internationally renowned artists and lovers of music gather in this enchanting snow-capped paradise to perform and enjoy some of the finest works in the classical repertory.

The festival is structured in three categories: three concert cycles spread across three outstanding venues. In the afternoon, the Gstaad Chapel hosts a selection of the most promising young artists. In the evening, the churches of Rougemont and Saanen will delight their audiences with the sounds of celebrated soloists and internationally renowned orchestras.

Les Amis des Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad

Founded following the initial series of concerts, the friends' association Les Amis des Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad, under the leadership of its new chairman Pierre Dreyfus, offers invaluable support to the Festival.

The complete press kit including press release, the full programme of events, biographies of the artists and HD images of the artists and of the various venues, along with the Sommets Musicaux logo and the accreditation form, can be downloaded here: www.sommets-musicaux.ch/presse

For organizational reasons, we would be grateful if you could obtain your accreditation by Friday 16 December 2022: www.sommets-musicaux.ch/accreditation-form/accreditation-form-in-french (French version)

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