



Press release

GSTAAD, 5 February 2023 – The 23rd Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad Festival has just drawn to a close. After 7 days of competition, British cellist Tim Posner has been named winner of the Prix Thierry Scherz. The Prix André Hoffmann has been awarded to American cellist Madelyn Kowalski and American pianist Anna Han.

The prizewinners performed at the chapel of Gstaad as part of the ‘Young Talent’ series on 3 February and 31 January respectively after 7 days of competition.

Prix Thierry Scherz awarded to Tim Posner

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 British cellist Steven Isserlis, who also mentored the young hopefuls, Mexican composer in residence Diana Syrse, and Patrick Peikert, manager of the Claves Records label. The jury awarded the Prix Thierry Scherz to this talented young British cellist, a former student at London’s Royal Academy of Music and First British major prizewinner at the International Karl Davidov Competition. Posner will record a CD with an orchestra on the Claves Records label. Claves Records will also promote the recording. The last winner of this prize was Danish violonist Anna Agafia (Egholm), whose CD of works by Nielsen and Szymanowki, recorded with Sinfonia Varsovia and conductor Aleksandar Marković, will be released on 3rd March 2023.

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 Diana Syrse and her composition for the Festival was entitled Black Fire. **Madelyn Kowalski** and **Anna Han** have been awarded the prize, which is endowed with 5,000 Swiss francs, for the best performance of this new work.

A confident audience back to the concert venues

The Festival is grateful and happy to have been able to organize 'normally' its 23rd edition, which took place from January 27 to February 4. What a joy it was to be able to once again enjoy artists performing in the marvellous acoustics of the church in Rougemont (250 seats), in the woody warmth of the church in Saanen (600 seats), and in the cosy intimacy of the chapel in Gstaad (80 seats). Knowledgeable music lovers and new enthusiasts alike, among them locals, attended the concerts in large numbers with several "sold out" concerts (January 27 and February 2, 3 and 4).

A special concert for local children and return of the dinners

Des malheurs de Sophie ('Sophie's Misfortunes'), a seminal work of children's literature, after the Countess of Ségur, with a text by Anaïs Vaugelade and set to music by Robert Schumann, was to have been performed in 2022, but for reasons relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, the performance was postponed to 2023. The Festival is pleased to have been finally able to welcome young schoolchildren from the nearby area. This was another highlight of the Festival, starring musical storyteller **Élodie Fondacci** as narrator and a French pianist well versed in this genre, **Claire-Marie Le Guay**.

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 in the presence of the artists.

Memorable concerts

One of the highlights of the Festival was undoubtedly the opening concert on 27 January, which was of particular significance this year because it saw **Renaud Capuçon** performed on his birthday (and Mozart's!) in an all-Mozart program with young musicians (**Paul Zientara**, **Stéphanie Huang** and **Guillaume Bellom**). Schubert's devastating *Winterreise* took us to a different plane on 28 January, performed by baritone **Peter Mattei** and pianist **David Fray**. A concert that made a very strong impression on the audience. On the evening of 29 January, the Festival hosted the exceptional 'young tsar of the piano' **Alexandre Kantorow**, gold medallist at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, in classic programme of Brahms and Schubert (the 'Wanderer' Fantasy). On 31 January, the winner of 2018's Prix Thierry Scherz, the prolific concert artist **Anastasia Kobekina** played alongside the brilliant **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). The ensemble Le Consort made up of remarkable young musicians, harpsichordist **Justin Taylor**, violinists **Théotime Langlois de Swarte** and **Sophie de Bardonnèche** and cellist **Hanna Salzenstein**, sprinkled some stardust on a programme of Baroque music on 1 February (with the premiere of Reali's Follia!). Another brilliant young artist was featured on the Sommets Musicaux programme on 2 February, with the prodigious American pianist **Kit Armstrong**, also a mathematician and polyglot. Armstrong and French trumpeter **David Guerrier**, presented an unexpected programme combining Baroque and contemporary music for organ (a first!) and trumpet. Cellist in residence **Steven Isserlis** played with the **Orchestre Consuelo**, conducted by its director and founder **Victor-Julien Laferrière** 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 concert 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 24th Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad Festival will take place from 26 January to 3 February 2023. The featured instrument will be the piano.

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 2023 and here <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/31jd0oapjs5v8n3/AADkhaKMyxW0raZoViVrGzJOa?dl=0>.

Switzerland

Alexandra Egli, Music Planet, alexandra.egli@music-planet.ch, +41 79 293 84 10

France

Valérie Samuel, Opus 64, v.samuel@opus64.com, +33 140 26 77 94