



Press release

The 24th Festival of the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad from 26 January to 3 February 2024

The piano as theme of the festival

The festival will feature established stars and promising newcomers to the international scene, long-established Swiss orchestras, vocal music, a rendezvous with pianist Stephen Hough, mentor to the young pianists, and Karol Beffa as composer 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, 28 September 2023 – The Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad and their artistic director Renaud Capuçon present the musical programme of their 24th edition. From 26 January to 3 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 Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad will be able to hear outstanding young talent as well as internationally renowned virtuosos over the course of nine days.

The great pianist **Stephen Hough** will open the Festival. He will also serve as mentor to the seven brilliant young pianists who will, between them, give the first ever performances of the contemporary work composed especially for the festival by composer in residence **Karol Beffa**. Audiences will also have the pleasure of renewing acquaintance with friends of the festival: **Martha Argerich** alongside **Nelson Goerner**, **Emmanuel Pahud**, **Bertrand Chamayou**, **Daniel Lozakovich**, who made his first appearance at our Festival at the age of 14, as well as **Bruce Liu**, **Edgar Moreau**, **Hélène Mercier** and the **Hagen Quartet**. The festival will also be showcasing Swiss orchestras, with the **Bern Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Nicholas Carter**, as well as the **Orchestre de chambre de Lausanne** conducted by **Renaud Capuçon** and the **Lucerne Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of **Michael Sanderling**. For the first time, the Sommetts Musicaux de Gstaad will present a vocal ensemble, **La Sportelle**, who will perform a cappella in the church of Rougemont. In the church of Saanen, **Marthe Keller** will entertain an audience of children, taking them to the Middle Ages to discover the legend of the beautiful Magelone.

The **piano**, 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 pianists, 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 the great English pianist **Stephen Hough** – who will also take on the role of mentor to the young pianists – performing Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto no.1 in G minor op.25, among other works. He will be accompanied by the **Bern Symphony Orchestra**, the outstanding orchestra from the Swiss capital, boasting 140 years of history and led by their young conductor, Australian **Nicholas Carter**.

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 Swiss-French pianist and composer **Karol Beffa** as our composer in residence for the duration of the festival. His work for piano **Night and Day**, 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 Stephen Hough, the festival's mentor to the rising stars, will be offering guidance to the seven promising young musicians who will perform every afternoon in the chapel of Gstaad. They will have the honour of giving the first ever performances of *Night and Day*, composed specially for the Festival by Swiss-French composer in residence Karol Beffa.

Stephen Hough, mentor to the rising stars

Hailed by *The Economist* as one of the '20 living polymaths' of our age. Sir Stephen Hough combines a brilliant career as a pianist with further careers as a composer and a writer. He was the first classical performer – to receive a MacArthur Fellowship. He is a regular guest at prestigious festivals including the BBC Proms, where he has already appeared 29 times. His most recent recitals include performances at the Wigmore Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, at Caramoor, Toronto, Tallinn, Gstaad and at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall. The 2022–23 season included appearances in New York (92nd Street Y), Paris, Sydney, Atlanta and the Sage Gateshead (now The Glasshouse International Centre for Music). Sir Stephen Hough's impressive discography includes some 70 CDs, which have received a variety of international awards. In 2023, he released an album of Frederic Mompou's *Música callada* (Hyperion). Sir Stephen Hough is also renowned for his writing. His memoir *Enough: Scenes from Childhood* was published by Faber & Faber in spring 2023. These followed on from his collection of essays *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More* (Faber & Faber, 2019) – which won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Storytelling Award in 2020, as well as being named the *Financial Times's* Book of the Year for 2019 – as well as his first novel *The Final Retreat* (Sylph Editions, 2018). Stephen is a visiting lecturer at Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford University, a visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music, holder of the International Chair in Piano Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music (where he was named a Fellow in 2019) and he teaches at the Juilliard School in New York.

Karol Beffa, composer in residence

Swiss-French musician Karol Beffa pursued his musical studies alongside his general education, having been a child actor between the ages of seven and 12, appearing in over 15 films. He finished first in his class at the École Normale Supérieure, studying history (bachelor's degree), English (master's degree), philosophy (a Masters at Cambridge University) and mathematics. He entered the Conservatoire de Paris in 1988, where he was awarded eight first prizes (in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, music of the 20th century, orchestration, musical theory, vocal accompaniment and piano improvisation). He finished first in his teaching diploma examinations (*agrégation*), going on to teach at the Université Paris IV-Sorbonne (1998–2003). He obtained his doctorate in musicology in 2003, with a thesis on György Ligeti's *Études*. Since 2004, he has been a lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure. For the year 2012–13, he was elected to the annual chair for creative work at the Collège de France, and in 2015 received his accreditation in research supervision. As a pianist, he regularly accompanies silent films and literary readings, and improvises on themes suggested by audiences. As a composer, he has written more than 20 film scores, as well as three stage scores. He received the Grand Prix lycéen for composition in 2016, and in 2017 was awarded the Grand Prix for orchestral music from SACEM (Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music) for his work over the course of his career. In 2013 and 2018, he won the classical prize in the Victoires de la Musique.

The concerts

The young pianists, alongside their fellow musicians, will be performing works by a wide range of composers: Bach, Ravel, Liszt, Brahms, Schumann, Lutosławski, Ligeti, Beethoven, Gondai, Schubert, Chopin, Stravinsky, Grieg and Pärt – a range of works that Renaud Capuçon has been at pains to make as varied and diverse as possible.

Slava Guerchovitch is a French pianist born in 1999 in the Principality of Monaco. Born into a family of violinists, he chose the piano instead and went on to study it at the Conservatoire de Paris, studying with the likes of Michel Béroff, Laurent Cabasso, Marie-Josèphe Jude and Henri Cartier-Bresson. He was awarded his piano diploma unanimously with the congratulations of the jury. **Arielle Beck**, born in 2009, won the Premier Grand Prix at the International Young Chopin Competition, chaired by Martha Argerich, in 2018. Since 2022, she has been taught by Romano Pallottini. She entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris in 2023, in the class led by Claire Désert. She will be performing on 28 January. Born in 1998 in Japan, **Chisato Taniguchi** started playing the piano at the age of three. In 2022, she won second prize in the 15th Orléans International Piano Competition, as well as the 'Résidence Henri Dutilleux–Geneviève Joy' prize. She also won first prize in the 14th Kyōgaku contemporary music competition in Japan in 2020. She will appear on 29 January. Born in 2004, **Victor Demarquette** started the piano at the age of five, entering the class of Rena Sherevskaya at the École Normale de Musique de Paris at the age of six. Rena Sherevskaya also taught Lucas Debargue and Alexandre Kantorow. We will hear this young man on 30 January. **Louisa Sophia Jefferson** was born in 2005, has played the piano since she was five and has won several first prizes at a number of national and international music competitions – including Hamburg's Instrumentalwettbewerb, the Steinway Competition, 'Jugend musiziert' and the International Feurich Competition for piano in Vienna. She will be performing on 31 January. **Tähe-Lee Liiv** is regarded as one of the brightest rising stars among Estonian pianists. She has appeared in solo recitals, in chamber music concerts and as a soloist with orchestras in Europe, Israel and the United States. Her first CD appeared in the summer of 2023 and we will hear her on 1 February. Born in 2000, **Arthur Hinnewinkel** began his piano studies in Singapore. Winner of several international competitions and recently a finalist at the 30th International Clara Haskil piano competition in Vevey, he appears regularly as a soloist and chamber musician. He will bring the series to a close on 2 February.

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 Karol Beffa and Stephen Hough 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 piano 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 Karol Beffa's *Night and Day*. 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 Messiaen, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schreker, Mozart, Beethoven, Rachmaninov and Saint-Saëns, performed by a host of star musicians, particularly pianists, who will ensure that the Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad are *the* unmissable musical event of early 2024.

As mentioned above, on 26 January the church of Saanen will open the Festival by playing host to the mentor to the young pianists, the great English pianist **Stephen Hough**, for an orchestral programme with the **Bern Symphony Orchestra**, under the baton of **Nicholas**

Carter. The programme will feature Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto no.1 in G minor op.25 and two orchestral works, Beethoven's Symphony no.1 in C major op.21 and Grieg's Holberg Suite op.40 for string orchestra. On 27 January, the Festival will have the rare honour of welcoming the great Canadian pianist **Hélène Mercier**, part of a quartet with **Renaud Capuçon**, **Edgar Moreau** and **Pascal Moraguès**. Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* ('Quartet for the End of Time') promises to be an exceptional evening. The Orchestre de chambre de Lausanne, conducted by its musical director **Renaud Capuçon**, will accompany Swedish violin prodigy **Daniel Lozakovich**. The programme on the evening of 30 January will feature two masterpieces of the repertoire, Mendelssohn's bewitching Violin Concerto in E minor op.64 and Brahms's Serenade no.1 in D major op.11. On 2 February, the festival will welcome French pianist **Bertrand Chamayou**, a key figure on the musical scene, who can oscillate from one style to another with bewildering ease. He will be performing with the **Lucerne Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of its chief conductor **Michael Sanderling**. Mozart's Piano Concerto no.20 in D minor K466 will be followed by Beethoven's Symphony no.7 in A major op.92. The programme will open with the Intermezzo for string orchestra op.8 by Austrian composer Franz Schreker. The Festival will be brought to a close on 3 February with an exceptional evening of music, bringing together two of the great luminaries of the piano for a memorable piano duo: **Martha Argerich** and **Nelson Goerner** will play Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances for two pianos op.45b, a programme rounded off by Saint-Saëns's *Le Carnaval des animaux* (Carnival of the Animals) with Annie Dutoit as narrator, Lyda Chen on the viola and other musical friends.

This year, in the church of Saanen, the Festival will be offering a special concert for local children: Brahms's 'Die schöne Magelone' on 30 January at 10am.

Brahms set to music 15 of the 18 romances that are interspersed through Ludwig Tieck's narrative that appears in the second volume of his *Volksmärchen* (1797). Taking its inspiration from legend, the work tells of the thwarted loves, on either side of the Mediterranean, of the knight and troubadour Peter of Provence and the beautiful Neapolitan princess Magelone. Their adventures will ultimately reach a happy conclusion, represented in the Magelone Cathedral (Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul), in Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone near Montpellier. This promises to be another highlight of the Festival, featuring actress **Marthe Keller**, baritone **Christian Immler** and pianist **Fabrizio Chiovetta**.

Concerts at the church of Rougemont

The artistic director's 'coups de cœur': five concerts in 2024

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 28, 29 and 31 January and 1 February 2024. The series will open on the morning of 28 January with a young star of the cello, **Edgar Moreau**. The oldest of a brotherhood of musicians and winner of the Rostropovich, Tchaikovsky and Young Concert Artist competitions, presents a concert that could not be more perfectly conceived for this marvellous venue – Bach's Cello Suites nos. 1, 2 and 3: truly a great occasion in prospect. The other concerts will take place at 7.30pm. The evening of 28 January also promises to be a special occasion, with the arrival of the bright new pianistic superstar **Bruce Liu**. The Canadian, who has been making waves across the world, is an unstoppable force, certainly in the eyes of his legion of fans. The new winner of the prestigious Chopin competition has it all. He will offer a programme of Haydn's Piano Sonata no.47 in B minor Hob. XVI:32, Ravel's *Miroirs* and Franz Liszt's *Réminiscences de Don Juan* S. 418. On 29 January, the Festival will present a real novelty, hosting an exclusively vocal ensemble – and what an ensemble! The eight-part sacred music group **Ensemble La Sportelle** has been associated with the Rocamadour Festival since it was founded in 2017: it has a permanent residency there. The programme will include works by eight composers, including Bruckner, Poulenc and Elgar. We will hear another friend of the festival on 31 January; the flautist and Berlin Philharmonic star **Emmanuel Pahud** will present a quartet programme alongside violinist **Anna Agafia**, violist **Paul Zientara** and cellist **Stéphanie Huang**, also former contenders for the Thierry Scherz and André Hoffmann prizes. Two Mozart quartets and a Beethoven Serenade will be on the programme. The final date of the series will pay tribute to a great Austrian string quartet, which has been active for 40 years: the **Hagen Quartet**, made up of **Lukas Hagen**, **Rainer Schmidt**, **Veronika Hagen** and **Clemens Hagen**. On the programme will be two of the outstanding masterworks of the repertoire, Debussy's String Quartet in G minor op.10 and Beethoven's String Quartet no.14 in C sharp minor op.131.

A true winter rendezvous

The festival will feature a total of 18 concerts from 26 January to 3 February 2024. 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.

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 11 September 2023. 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 28 January at the church of Rougemont at 11am is free of charge

The concert for children on 30 January at the church of Saanen, 'Die schöne Magelone' 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 Véronique de Sénépart, 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 15 December 2023**: www.sommets-musicaux.ch/accreditation-form/accreditation-form-in-french (French version)

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