

## *Le Piano Symphonique – a new beacon in Swiss musical life \**

A look ahead at outstanding, unforgettable pianistic moments at the piano festival «Le Piano Symphonique» 2025 with Martha Argerich as «Pianiste Associée»



Since 2022, the Swiss city of Lucerne has been moving towards becoming a new, magically attractive place of pilgrimage for lovers of piano, with all the radiant power of a pianistic «lighthouse in Swiss musical life», as the newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) has described it. That was the year that the **Luzerner Sinfonieorchester** launched the festival *Le Piano Symphonique*, in which the focus is on the piano, but often in association with symphonic sounds. The festival programme includes not just selected recitals, but also features intimate chamber-music ensembles and solo concertos with orchestra. «Le

Piano Symphonique» is thus not just «a premier piano festival», as the *BBC Music Magazine* wrote, but also a unique opportunity to experience internationally renowned artists from close-up.

The founder and director of the festival, **Numa Bischof Ullmann**, wants to explicitly break with «programming conventions», as Jan Brachmann notes in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. For example, instead of having a symphony performed in the second half of a concert after a piano concerto with orchestra in the first half, he uses chamber music as a counterpoint. The reputed piano journal *Piano News* recently wrote: «It is beyond question that *Le Piano Symphonique* has a great future with its exciting and diverse programming ... it is a blessing for all piano fans who want to discover something unusual and are ready to take a trip to beautiful Lucerne to do so.» And this concept has convinced festival visitors from all over the world, which is precisely the vision that Bischof Ullmann has for the festival.

### « Le Piano Symphonique » 2025

In January 2025, too, enthusiasts of piano music can look forward to experiencing outstanding artists. The festival will be opening its doors from **13 to 18 January 2025**. Three recitals with more star pianists will take place surrounding the festival as part of the concert season: with Krystian Zimerman (13 March 2025), Khatia Buniatishvili (26 April 2025) and Evgeny Kissin (20 June 2025). One of the highlights of the 2025 festival is also connected with **Evgeny Kissin**: the «**Shostakovich Project**». Here, the Russian star pianist will play with long-time musical friends and companions such as Gidon Kremer, the Kopelman Quartet, the soprano Chen Reiss and the tenor Michael Schade in performances of works by the Russian composer. **Martha Argerich**, the «master of weightless sound» (NZZ), is to remain a key figure at the festival as «**Pianiste Associée**».

She can be experienced seven times in all at the festival. In a duo with **Mikhail Pletnev**, she will give the **premiere** of a piano version of Franz Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* that Pletnev made for two pianists as a commission for *Le Piano Symphonique*. The idea for a transcription of Schubert's work came from Mikhail Pletnev during a conversation with Martha Argerich and the director and was conceived after the unforgettable concert given by the two pianists on January 16, 2024. «The transcription is, so to speak, cut to fit the soul of the festival *Le Piano Symphonique* and epitomises its leitmotif», says Numa Bischof Ullmann. Argerich will also be performing in a trio with her cellist partner of many years, **Mischa Maisky**, and the violinist **Janine Jansen**. She will also take part in two performances of the *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns: one together

with her daughter **Annie Dutoit** as narrator in the 2nd Act of the evening program (17 January 2025) and then in the morning family programme (18 January 2025) with an animated film by Sandra Albucrek. Lastly, «La Martha» will be performing Beethoven's first piano concerto in the final concert at the festival.

Another highlight of the 2025 piano festival will be the recital by **Ilya Shmukler**, this year's winner of the renowned Concours Géza Anda: «Ilya Shmukler will introduce himself with a powerful programme and will also give us the premiere by the Swiss composer **Walter Furrer** (1902-1978)», says festival director Numa Bischof Ullmann, «while also contributing another interpretation of the work that partly gave its name to the festival, Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*.» The **Gerzenberg-Zilberstein family** will also play an important role in the festival. With their mother, Lilya Zilberstein, and Martha Argerich, the brothers Anton Gerzenberg and Daniel Arkadij Gerzenberg will perform eight-handed works for two pianos. Anton Gerzenberg will also feature in the final concert with Frédéric Chopin's *Andante spianato et Grande polonaise brillante*. Family ties have a «high



significance» at the festival, says Bischof Ullmann, pointing out that the Gerzenberg-Zilberstein family is represented by two generations and the **Argerich family** even by three. Here, note should be taken of Stéphanie Argerich's film «**The Night's Music**», which will be shown on January 14, 2025, parallel to the performance of Bartók's piece of the same name from the «Out of Doors» suite – one of the first screenings in a large setting. The Turkish pianist **Fazıl Say** will also be performing in Lucerne alongside the Gerzenberg and Argerich families, opening the festival with Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. And **Leif Ove Andsnes** will be a guest, bringing along a

contemporary work as well as pieces by Edvard Grieg and Frédéric Chopin, while the Italian pianist **Beatrice Rana** will be performing Mendelssohn's first piano concerto with the Luzerner Sinfonieorchester and the German-Greek pianist **Kiveli Dörken** will play Late Romantic chamber music with members of the same orchestra. There will also be a Berlin-style ballad-and-chanson concert with **HK Gruber** and **Kirill Gerstein**. And jazz lovers will get their money's worth this year, too: the leading German jazz pianist of the younger generation, **Michael Wolny**, will be appearing in a duo with the harpsichordist **Tamar Halperin**.

So there is a lot on offer at «Le Piano Symphonique», and it is well worth taking a dive into this magical festival world to experience some unforgettable musical moments — or as the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung sums it up: «piano concerts that will long stay in the memory».

\* Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 20th January 2024

## LUZERNER SINFONIEORCHESTER

1805  
RESIDENZORCHESTER KKL LUZERN



Information & Tickets  
Ticketline: +41 412260515  
[karten@sinfonieorchester.ch](mailto:karten@sinfonieorchester.ch)  
sinfonieorchester.ch  
kkk-luzern.ch

 Bettina Schimmer

Lindenstraße 14  
50674 Köln

+49 (0)221 - 168 796 23  
bettina.schimmer@schimmer-pr.de  
www.schimmer-pr.de