

Media Release

Michael Haefliger to Conclude His Directorship of Lucerne Festival at the End of 2025 – Board of Trustees Appoints Search Committee

Michael Haefliger has decided not to extend his contract as Executive and Artistic Director at Lucerne Festival. The current contract continues until the end of 2025. The Board of Trustees has appointed a committee to conduct an international search for his successor.

Lucerne, 21 November 2022. Michael Haefliger, who has been leading Lucerne Festival since 1999 with great success, has decided not to extend his contract. The current contract runs until the end of 2025. Haefliger states: "Naturally, this decision was not easy for me. But by the end of 2025, I will have directed Lucerne Festival for 26 years. That is a very long time in which I have had the privilege, honor, and pleasure to develop and shape this unique festival. I am very proud of and grateful for what we have been able to achieve during this time, together with the team and our many loyal partners, as well as with the support of the city and canton of Lucerne. It is the right moment to pass this jewel along into new hands. But before that, I will devote myself to the Festival over the next three years with great passion and energy – this has not changed. I look forward to everything that is yet to come."

The Board of Trustees has appointed a search committee to find a successor to Michael Haefliger. The committee comprises members of the Board of Trustees – Markus Hongler (Chairman), Christian Casal, Christoph Franz, Executive Councillor Marcel Schwerzmann, and Anne Schwöbel – as well as Elisabeth Sobotka, Artistic Director of the Bregenz Festival, and Stefan Dohr, principal horn of the Berlin Philharmonic. The Board of Trustees plans to make its decision and announce Michael Haefliger's successor by the fourth quarter of 2023.

Markus Hongler, Chairman of Lucerne Festival's Board of Trustees, remarks: "It is not yet time to say goodbye to Michael Haefliger. We will be able to benefit from his extraordinary skills for another three years, as he has just launched three new Festival projects – Lucerne Festival Forward for contemporary music, a spring festival featuring the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, and a piano festival curated by Igor Levit. But I am very grateful to him for informing us of his decision at this stage, which gives us enough time to find his successor. This will be a very demanding task, since Michael Haefliger set new international standards during his time at Lucerne Festival and brought the Festival worldwide recognition, from which the city and region of Lucerne have in turn benefited. Michael Haefliger has arranged a diverse Festival program of the highest quality every year, featuring the best international orchestras and soloists. In addition, together with Claudio Abbado he founded the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, which is now led by Riccardo Chailly; with Pierre Boulez he established the Lucerne Festival Academy, which Wolfgang Rihm now heads; and, most recently, launched the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra. No other international festival promotes contemporary music to the same extent as Lucerne Festival nor experiments so boldly with new concert formats and innovative approaches to reach new target groups. Through these decisive measures, Michael Haefliger has given the Festival a unique profile around the world. He has also created a solid financial foundation by building up the network of loyal sponsoring partners and by expanding the Lucerne Festival Friends. The high level of self-financing, which is more than 90 percent, is unparalleled for a festival in this category. Our ambition is to maintain and further develop this high level in artistic and economic terms, this international uniqueness, and this attachment to the city and region of Lucerne for the future."

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