

LUCERNE FESTIVAL

“OPEN END” IS THE THEME

2025 Summer Festival



The focus of this year's Summer Festival is on open-ended, unfinished, or cyclical works - with a special emphasis on the "Cosmos Boulez" to mark the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth

The end of an era, but not the end of Lucerne Festival: Michael Haefliger's final Lucerne Summer Festival

This year's "Open End" theme is reflected in the summer's artistic programming, while at the same time it stands as a tribute to Michael Haefliger's final Summer Festival: after 26 years at the helm, at the end of 2025 he will hand over direction of the Festival to his successor Sebastian Nordmann. The visual designed to illustrate the "open end" theme uses a perpetual circle to typographically convey related ideas of a desire for novelty and movement, a sense of joyful eagerness, and openness for what is to come.

In 2004, the composer Pierre Boulez and Michael Haefliger together founded the Lucerne Festival Academy. The Festival dedicates a series under the rubric "Cosmos Boulez" to this extraordinary figure to mark the occasion of his 100th birthday. Twelve works by Pierre Boulez will be performed during the Summer Festival: by the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) in various formations, at the *räsonanz* - Donor Concert, and by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in the Opening Concert at the very beginning of the Festival. Throughout his life, Boulez viewed composing as a work-in-progress, a creative process with no end point - in other words, an "open end." Wolfgang Rihm remarked: "I see the trace of an almost compulsive, genuine compositional energy that does not accept closure." The formal idea of the never-ending spiral is an element typical of many of Boulez's works. He first developed this model in *Poésie pour pouvoir* in 1958 and subsequently in *Répons*. Both works will be performed by the LFCO this summer: *Poésie pour pouvoir* under the direction of David Robertson and *Répons* with Jonathan Nott on the podium.

The Lucerne Festival Orchestra will open the Summer Festival on 15 August with Gustav Mahler's Tenth Symphony, a work left unfinished by the composer. It was only decades later that the British musicologist Deryck Cooke prepared a viable performing version. Other unfinished works can be found on the Vienna Philharmonic's program, which includes *Symphonic Pieces* from the Opera *Lulu* by Alban Berg and Anton Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, as well as on the Munich Philharmonic's program, which features Franz Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony.

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The idea of eternity and the eternal cycle of nature is also a recurring theme of the Summer Festival programming. This connotation of “open end” is reflected by Gustav Mahler’s *Rückert-Lieder*, which will also be performed by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and Riccardo Chailly during the Opening Concert, as well as by Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, with which Sir Simon Rattle will make his debut with the Lucerne Festival Orchestra. The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra under Keri-Lynn Wilson will also focus on the idea of eternity with Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*, featuring Rachel Willis-Sørensen as the soloist. Other works end with a musical fading out, such as Richard Strauss’s symphonic poem *Don Juan* with the Orchestre de Paris – Philharmonie and Gustav Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, to be performed by the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko.

The 2025 “Open-End Festival” will mark the end of an era as the final Summer Festival of Executive and Artistic Director Michael Haefliger’s tenure. On the last day of the Festival, 14 September, his big farewell party will be celebrated under the rubric “Les Adieux.” Prominent solo artists and orchestras, including the Lucerne Festival Orchestra with Music Director Riccardo Chailly, an ensemble from the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Sol Gabetta, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Igor Levit, Stefan Dohr, and many others who have been colleagues through the years will gather together. The program will also include world premieres of works by Winnie Huang and Jüri Reinvere. Speeches and messages of greeting will round out this three-hour marathon concert. The detailed program is available online at lucernefestival.ch/les-adioux.

26 Years with Michael Haefliger as Festival Director

Since taking office as Executive and Artistic Director of Lucerne Festival at the beginning of 1999, Michael Haefliger has introduced numerous new initiatives that have significantly shaped the Festival’s profile and continue to do so to this day. He expanded the Festival’s commitment to contemporary music and developed new, innovative concert formats such as the 40min series. Since 1999, nearly 400 world premieres have taken place at the Festival, and more than 280 works by contemporary composers have been commissioned. For each Summer Festival, he chose a particular theme to emphasize artistic and socio-political ideas. In 2016, for example, the theme “PrimaDonna” put a spotlight on the role of women in the music world, while in 2022 a focus was placed on the socio-critical theme of “Diversity.” In addition to various initiatives, Michael Haefliger founded the Lucerne Festival Orchestra together with Claudio Abbado in 2003 and the Lucerne Festival Academy with Pierre Boulez in 2004. Following the deaths of the two founders, he ushered in a new era for each of these institutions in 2016 by appointing Riccardo Chailly as the new Music Director of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and Wolfgang Rihm as Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy.

In 2021, Michael Haefliger founded the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO), which also performs abroad at renowned festivals and events. In recent years, Haefliger has additionally launched three new short festivals: “Lucerne Festival Forward” for contemporary music in November, the Spring Festival featuring the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, and Piano Fest in May, which is curated by the pianist Igor Levit.

In the fall of 2013, together with Sir Anish Kapoor and Arata Isozaki, he initiated an innovative social project: Lucerne Festival Ark Nova, a mobile concert hall that was created as a gift for the Japanese population in the area affected by the devastating earthquake of 2011. From 4 to 14 September 2025, the Ark Nova will be on display in Lucerne.

Photos may be downloaded at lucernefestival.ch/en/press/photos

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