

Gstaad Festival Orchestra (GFO)

“This is what real world-class sounds like” (Hamburger Abendblatt reviewing the concert at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg)

Every year, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy thrills its audience with unique concerts and top-class musical programmes set amidst magnificent countryside. The Gstaad Festival Orchestra (GFO) grew out of the vision to spread the innovative, inspiring spirit of the Menuhin Festival abroad and to enable this celebrated annual music festival to resonate on an international platform.

The Gstaad Festival Orchestra is made up of the best musicians from Switzerland's leading orchestras. These high-class musicians are now forming a sort of musical 'national team'. Its members are musicians from the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, the Zurich Opera Orchestra, the Kammerorchester Basel, the Basel Symphony Orchestra and the Bern Symphony Orchestra. Furthermore, some of the best students from international music institutions are selected every year to play with the GFO. The aim is to bring high-quality sound and famous musical spirit of the top Swiss orchestras together, in order to create a process of dialogue between the musicians and to forge at the same time a dynamic, unique-sounding orchestra every year.

Jaap van Zweden, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, is renowned internationally for his success around the world. After his considerable influence on the GFO and the Gstaad Conducting Academy in 2017 and 2018, van Zweden returns to the GFO's pulpit this season with an impressive repertoire in addition to great symphonic works such as the 4th Symphony by Brahms and the 7th Symphony by Dvořák, he devotes himself to the 1st Piano Concerto by Tchaikovsky and the Cello Concerto by Elgar together with Khatia Buniatishvili (piano) and Sol Gabetta (violoncello).

Since its formation in 2010, the GFO has been soaring to ever-new musical flights. Within the course of its tours the orchestra e.g. played at the Rheingau Music Festival, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Festival La Chaise Dieu, Herrenchiemsee Festival, Meran Festival, Stresa Music Festival, the Vienna Concert Hall, the Cologne Philharmonic Hall, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, Festspielhaus Bregenz, Dresdner Frauenkirche, the Philharmonic Hall at Gasteig in Munich, or Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

The Gstaad Festival Orchestra has established itself as a brilliant and charismatic first-class orchestra. Season upon season it has experienced new success. The soloistic partners of the orchestra include amongst others, Sol Gabetta, Héléne Grimaud, Jonas Kaufmann, Martin Grubinger, Seong-Jin Cho, Renaud Capuçon, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Khatia Buniatishvili, Fazil Say and Vilde Frang.

GSTAAD FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

A wonderful video recording of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, conducted by Jaap van Zweden, was made in the summer of 2017 in the Gstaad Festival Tent, which can be seen on www.gstaaddigitalfestival.ch. During a celebrated concert tour in the summer of 2015 the first live cd recording took place. It was published by Sony in January 2016. It features the new version of the Swan Lake suite by Tchaikovsky created by Kristjan Järvi.

The GFO regularly performs new compositions, e.g. by composers like Fazil Say, Daniel Schnyder, Dieter Ammann, Isabel Mundry, and Georg Breinschmid. These works include a newly composed piece by Mark-Anthony Turnage: "Dialogue" (2015), with the soloists Patricia Kopatchinskaja (violin) and Sol Gabetta (cello).

In summer 2020, the GFO will - for the seventh time since 2014 - be a part of the Gstaad Academy's heart piece Gstaad Conducting Academy, acting as "Orchestra in Residence". 10 junior conductors from all over the world will be given the opportunity to work with the GFO for three weeks and conduct at its performances. This Conducting Academy, which is unique in Europe, will take place under the artistic direction of Jaap van Zweden and Johannes Schlaefli.

10.12.2020, LW