

Christoph Müller and Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy

"It is a constant challenge to perpetuate and develop Yehudi Menuhin's artistic message. His unquenchable thirst for novelty piques my curiosity. Returning to the roots is both a step forward towards the origin, and simplicity and creativity. We do our utmost to give this philosophical breeding ground a contemporary form."

By hiring the Basel-based 30-year-old cellist and cultural manager in 2002, the second largest festival in Switzerland secured the collaboration of one of the youngest directors in the field, thus taking a courageous but decisive step on the road to renewal. It was no coincidence that Christoph Müller, who has a degree in business administration and who willingly confesses to being "very honoured" to hold this position, was chosen by the Board of Directors of the Gstaad Menuhin Festival. Since he took over as artistic director, attendance at the event has more than doubled and the added value for the entire region has increased enormously.

Revival of the spirit of Menuhin

This growth is not the result of a magic formula, but of in-depth reflection aimed at offering the public a wide variety of concerts and activities of the highest possible quality, a source of emotion as well as discovery, as has always been advocated by the founding father of the festival, Yehudi Menuhin, whose revival is sealed by the new directorship of Christoph Müller. This vision can be seen in the wide range of themes that serve as pillars of the programme, from the all-important chamber music concerts that form the DNA of the event – these sessions "among friends" held in the ideal setting of the region's intimate and stylish churches – to the great symphony evenings in the Festival Tent in Gstaad, including events held in unusual locations such as a mountain chalet or restaurant, concerts in the "L'Heure Bleue" series performed by students of the Gstaad Academy, or the "Today's Music" series, where classical music meets more contemporary or "exotic" musical genres.

Carte blanche, creations, young talents, new audiences

Christoph Müller's hallmark is also reflected in the creation of a popular series of recitals called "Matinées des Jeunes Etoiles" to encourage up-and-coming artists, as well as in the intensification of commissions to contemporary composers. It is also expressed in the creation of "Discovery", a mediation programme for young audiences (who are given the opportunity to meet artists, go behind the scenes and learn more about the instruments and works played under specialised guidance), and in the launch of the "Menuhin's Heritage Artists" loyalty programme, which gives a handful of hand-picked performers a five-year carte blanche.

An academy, an orchestra, a streaming channel

If only one achievement should be mentioned, however, it would certainly be that of the Gstaad Academy, a high-flying masterclass taught by outstanding teachers in disciplines that have expanded continuously over the years – singing, strings, piano, early music, orchestral workshops for young people and amateurs (launched in the 2000s, they found their stride and were renamed Gstaad Festival Amateur Orchestra and Gstaad Festival Youth Orchestra in 2020), as well as a conducting workshop since 2014 – and its superlative extension: a Gstaad Festival Orchestra launched in 2010, which since then has proved to be a prestigious ambassador for Saanenland around the world as well

as an essential partner for the Gstaad Conducting Academy. Furthermore, it has for some years now benefited from a highly efficient broadcasting platform, the Gstaad Digital Festival, which offers the public free streaming of the highlights of the event, with exclusive encounters with the artists and exciting backstage experiences.

Christoph Müller cultural manager

Christoph Müller, Artistic Director (since 2002)

- born in Basel in 1970, raised in Möhlin (AG)

Education:

- 1990: commercial baccalaureate in Muttensz (BL)
- 1991: professional cello studies at the Bern Conservatory of Music (professor: Patrick Demenga) and Bienne Conservatory of Music (professor: Conradin Brotbek)
- 1995: Teaching Diploma with Honours
- 1996: admission to the virtuosity class at the Winterthur Conservatory of Music (professor: Thomas Grossenbacher)
- 1997: Orchestral Diploma (with Conradin Brotbek)
- 1999: Concert Diploma with Honours

Professional activities:

As cellist:

- cellist in various chamber music ensembles
- teacher in various music schools
- principal cello in the Swiss Chamber Orchestra
- cellist in the Swiss Philharmonic Orchestra
- cellist in the Basel Chamber Orchestra

As cultural manager

- from 1996 to 2010: administrator (then director from 2007) of the Basel Chamber Orchestra
- 1999: foundation of the "swiss classics" agency dedicated to the organisation of the "Lucerne chamber circle" at the Lucerne Culture and Congress Centre (KKL)
- 2000: member of the culture department of the KKL administration in Lucerne
- since 2002: Artistic Director of the Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy
- from 2005 to 2013: Artistic Director of Interlaken Classics
- 2006: foundation of the Solsberg Festival with cellist Sol Gabetta
- 2008: launch of "Artistic Management GmbH"
- since 2010: Concert Manager for the Basel Chamber Orchestra
- 2010: foundation of the "Müller Pavlik Artistic Management GmbH" concert agency with his long-standing partner Stefan Pavlik
- 2010/2011: launch of the "Klassiksterne Rheinfelden" concert season together with Sol Gabetta and the city of Rheinfelden

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- 2013: creation of the Joseph Haydn Stiftung, of which he is Chairman of the Council. His aim: to record over 19 seasons the complete 107 symphonies with conductor Giovanni Antonini, in time for Haydn Year 2032
- 2014: launch of the “Haydn 2032” project with two annual concerts in Vienna, Paris, Rome and Basel, and the recording of a CD with Giovanni Antonini, the Basel Chamber Orchestra and the Giardino Armonico
- 2015: founding of Hochrhein-Musikfestival AG, which represents under one roof the existing projects of the Solsberg Festival, Klassiksterne Rheinfelden & Aarau and Cappella Gabetta
- since March 2015: Board member of the Stradivarius-Habisreutinger Foundation
- 2015: Launch of the first Basel Composition Competition with Wolfgang Rihm as president of the jury
- 2016: creation of the “Don Bosco” cultural association, of which he was appointed president, and beginning of the planning work for the project to transform the Don Bosco church in Basel into a cultural centre
- 2018: Board member of the Cultural Foundation of the real estate insurance company GVB Bern
- 2020: launch of the “Klassiksterne Sarganserland” at the Verrucano in Mels and the “Klassiksterne A-Cappella Basel” at the Don Bosco Music and Culture Centre in Basel