

Saanen, December 2024

Gstaad Festival Orchestra (GFO)

“This is what real world-class sounds like” (Hamburger Abendblatt / Review of the Elbphilharmonie concert)

Every year, Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy thrills its audience with unique concerts and top-class musical programmes set amidst magnificent nature. The Gstaad Festival Orchestra (GFO) grew out of the vision to spread the innovative, inspiring spirit of the Festival abroad and to enable this celebrated annual 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, thereby creating dialogue between the musicians and forging a dynamic, unique-sounding orchestra every year.

Over the past decade, Jaap van Zweden has established himself as one of the most internationally renowned conductors, making appearances on three continents. Jaap van Zweden, who took the conductor’s podium for the first time with the GFO in 2017, currently Music Director of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Music Director-Designate of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, is set to return to Gstaad this summer, featuring Shostakovich’s *Symphony No. 5* and Mendelssohn’s *Concerto for 2 Pianos* (with Lucas and Arthur Jussen).

In addition, conductor Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, has again been invited to conduct part of the Gstaad Conducting Academy and a concert with the GFO.

The venezuelan Principal Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Domingo Hindoyan, will return to conduct the GFO this summer. He will conduct a semi-staged performance of Bellini’s opera *“Norma”* in Gstaad and in Baden-Baden at the Festspielhaus.

The grand half-scenic performance of Puccini’s *Tosca* on August 27, 2023, marked the beginning of a collaboration between the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy, set to last for at least three years. In 2024 and 2025, numerous concerts are scheduled to take place, with rehearsals conducted in Gstaad in the Bernese Oberland. Following the performances in Gstaad, the concerts will also be presented in Baden-Baden. Festspielhaus Director Benedikt Stampa remarks, *“The partnership with Gstaad Menuhin Festival aligns with our commitment to producing culture sustainably at the highest level.”*

GSTAAD MENUHIN FESTIVAL

& ACADEMY

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

The Gstaad Festival Orchestra has established itself as a brilliant and charismatic first-class orchestra, continually creating new stories of success with every season. Soloistic partners of the orchestra include Sol Gabetta, Hélène Grimaud, Jonas Kaufmann, Sonya Yoncheva, Martin Grubinger, Seong-Jin Cho, Jan Lisiecki, Renaud Capuçon, Katia and Marielle Labèque, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Khatia Buniatishvili, Fazil Say, Janine Jansen and Vilde Frang.

A captivating video recording from the summer of 2022 features Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony*, led by Jaap van Zweden, within the enchanting setting of the Gstaad Festival Tent. The performance can be seen on gstaadigitalfestival.ch. During a celebrated concert tour in the summer of 2015, the first live recording took place. It was published by Sony in January 2016 and features the new version of the Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* suite as 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 the summer of 2025, the GFO is set to celebrate its eleventh year of collaborating with the Gstaad Conducting Academy, serving as the "Orchestra in Residence" during the whole duration of the masterclass. This integral part of the Gstaad Academy provides a platform for ten aspiring conductors from across the globe to work alongside the GFO for several weeks, conducting concerts. Under the guidance of Jaap van Zweden, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla and Johannes Schlaefli, this unique European conducting academy continues its tradition.

Press reviews:

"With surgical precision and clarity from every music stand, stable architecture, and a constant interplay of tensions and resolutions ensuring narrative tension, the Gstaad Festival Orchestra captivates. One is riveted to the spot, overwhelmed by the force of this obsessive upheaval, by the grandeur of the gesture that directs it, to which the musicians seem to adhere as if through osmosis."

(*Le Temps*, August 22, 2023)

"Under the unpretentious, musical, and precise conducting of Domingo Hindoyan, the Gstaad Festival Orchestra develops an immensely vivid orchestral sound. It explores extremes without overshadowing the excellent ensemble of soloists. The horn section is an event, and the heavy brass has power without becoming brutal."

(*Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, August 29, 2023)

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