

Ascona 73 celebrates the genius of Bach

The 73rd edition of the Musical Weeks in Ascona (Switzerland) takes place from 6 September to 15 October with a programme of fourteen concerts - and the creative genius of Johann Sebastian Bach and his musical legacy will be the focus of this year's edition. The opening concert on 6 September presents Daniel Müller-Schott and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, while the closing concert on 15 October takes place with the OSI orchestra, the RSI chorus and Verdi's Requiem. Francesco Piemontesi, Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra Choir, Heinz Holliger, the Kammerorchester Basel, Renaud Capuçon and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, as well as the grand pianist Arcadi Volodos are just some of the stars expected this year. Among the new features, a free concert for children and families with the celebrated flutist Maurice Steger. Advance ticket sales as of 23 April.

Thanks to the presence of prestigious names in the concert world and an inspiring and eclectic programme, the 73rd edition with Francesco Piemontesi in his fifth term as artistic director, confirms the great success of the Settimane Musicali di Ascona; which have taken on a prominent role in the realm of classical music festivals in Europe.

As the artistic director, Francesco Piemontesi explains: "Johann Sebastian Bach was probably the most important composer in the history of music; both in his own time and for composers who in later eras referred to him. 2018 will be the year of Bach, and the proposed programme aims to emphasise the genius and extreme versatility of the Master of Leipzig - and on the other hand highlight the enormous interest that sparked the works of Bach from the romantic era on".

Each concert pays a direct or indirect homage to Bach. Alongside masterpieces such as the *Mass in B minor* or the *Goldberg Variations*, you hear works indicative of the great appreciation Bach continued to enjoy over time; such as the 19th and 20th century transcripts of choral works by Busoni, Respighi or Kempff. Ample space and a tribute will also be given to Felix Mendelssohn, the composer who first and foremost contributed to the rediscovery of Bach.

The 73rd edition of the Musical Weeks opens on 6 September with the **Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich** and with the young and charismatic German solo cellist **Daniel Müller-Schott**.

Additional highlights are Bach's *Mass in B minor* performed by the **Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir** on 18 September and conducted by **Ton Koopman**, a musician whose name is today greatly associated with Bach; followed on 21 September by the return of the **Orchestra Nazionale della RAI di Torino** to Ascona, conducted by **Rafael Payare** - and on 1 October, a concert with the acclaimed **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** and the solo violinist **Renaud Capuçon** in a dual role as conductor.

Among best-known names at international level is the Swiss musician **Heinz Holliger**, who conducts the **Kammerorchester Basel** on 24 September, and the distinguished Russian pianist **Arcadi Volodos**, who performs a programme on 4 October dedicated to Schubert, Scriabin and of course Rachmaninoff - of who he is one of the greatest performers in the world.

Bach specialist **Mahan Esfahani**, an American organist and harpsichordist of Iranian origin, will perform the famous *Goldberg Variations* on the harpsichord and, as almost a first for the Musical Weeks in Ascona, two works by Frescobaldi on the organ at the Collegio Papio in Ascona.

For his part, **Francesco Piemontesi** will dedicate a recital to Bach, Debussy and Rachmaninoff on 14 September, and furthermore perform a Mozart concert with the aforementioned Kammerorchester Basel on 24 September.

Conducted by **Jérémie Rhorer**, the **Orchestra della Svizzera italiana** will perform on 10 September with the young violinist **Augustin Hadelich** - Grammy Award winner 2016 - while, under the guidance of **Markus Poschner** and accompanied by the **RSI choir**, with grand pomp the OSI concludes the 73rd edition with Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem*; one of the most important works of the late 19th century.

The matinée dedicated to young musicians on 22 September makes its debut with the very young Locarno-born pianist **Alex Cattaneo** - a talented artist well on his way to a career; while on the following Saturday, 29 September, you can delight in the very promising violinist **Tobias Feldmann**.

In particular, among the novelties to take note of this year is the “**Tino Flautino e il gatto Leo**” spectacle on 15 September at the Locarno theatre, starring the celebrated flutist **Maurice Steger** and others. This special event will be free and is organised and offered by the Associazione Amici delle Settimane Musicali association, with the purpose of bringing children, youths and their families closer to classical music.

Historic venues for the festive concerts are the charming Church of San Francesco in Locarno, the Collegio Papio in Ascona and the Sopracenerina palace for the two concerts in the Début Series.

Tickets (prices range from CHF 20.00 to 140.00 according to the concert and category) are available from 23 April at Ascona Locarno tourism branches and at all Ticketcorner sales points in Switzerland. Advance online ticket sales at www.settimane-musicali.ch. For further information and reservations please call: + 41 91 759 76 65, or info@settimane-musicali.ch. Official website www.settimane-musicali.ch.

The 73rd edition of the Musical Weeks in Ascona is organised by the Fondazione Settimane Musicali Ascona foundation (bringing together the local tourism organisation Lago Maggiore e Valli, the Associazione Amici delle Settimane Musicali and the Patriziato Ascona association) together with the support of: Canton Ticino (Swisslos funds), Locarno's foundation for culture and the municipalities of Brione s/Minusio, Losone, Minusio, Muralto, Locarno and Orselina. Sponsors: Cornèr Bank, CORSI (cooperative society for Swiss television & radio in the Italian language), Migros Culture Percentage Ticino, Raiffeisen, SES Società Elettrica Sopracenerina. Media partners: RSI Rete Due, Corriere del Ticino, Tessiner Zeitung, il Caffè, SGA and Ticketcorner.