



Ascona Music Weeks Celebrate 80 Years with a Special Edition

From 2 September to 23 October: fifteen concerts featuring world-class orchestras and renowned soloists. Francesco Piemontesi's final edition is "a tribute to friendship". Presale begins May 7

This year's edition of the Settimane Musicali di Ascona, to be held **from 2 September to 23 October**, will be particularly special. The program features outstanding international performers and **fifteen top-tier concerts** marking an important and **prestigious milestone**: the **80th anniversary** of a festival that is the second oldest in Switzerland after Lucerne and that has hosted many world-famous musicians over the decades. This special edition also marks **the final one under the artistic direction of Francesco Piemontesi**, as the festival will undergo a significant transformation in 2026. It will be a unique occasion to bid farewell to a director who has provided the event with new energy and guided it with depth and consistency into the international spotlight.

*"After nearly fifteen years of work and twelve seasons as Artistic Director," writes **Francesco Piemontesi**, "I present my final edition with great emotion. The festival celebrates the prestigious milestone of 80 years—an anniversary that highlights its long history of musical excellence. For this special occasion, I chose to invite only friends and colleagues I've had the privilege of meeting on my concert tours and with whom I've had the great pleasure of collaborating. Among them, I think especially of **Gianandrea Noseda** and **Robin Ticciati**, the conductors I've worked with most frequently; **Ton Koopman**; **Golda Schultz**, with whom I made my debut with the New York Philharmonic; **Sonia Wieder-Atherton**; and **Maxim Emelyanychev**, probably the most extraordinary talent I've ever encountered. Having them all in the program for this jubilee edition is a tribute to friendship and to the deep musical connection we've developed over the years in Ascona and beyond."*

Francesco Ressiga Vacchini, President of the Ascona Music Weeks Foundation, also pays tribute to the festival's history: *"Celebrating the 80th edition is an important achievement, especially in an age of often fleeting projects. A grateful thought goes to the founders of 1946 and to all those who, with passion and dedication—often as volunteers—have contributed to the festival's growth and continuity over the years."* He also extends heartfelt thanks to Francesco Piemontesi for his twelve-year artistic leadership. *"We wish him continued success, and the same to **Christoph Müller**, his successor who will take over in 2026 and lead the festival toward new horizons, with special focus on young talent and a growing audience."*



A festive and prestigious program

The program covers a wide range of repertoire—from symphonic music to chamber music, from the baroque era to major 20th-century compositions—and features renowned orchestras, internationally acclaimed artists, and promising young talents.

Traditionally, the fifteen concerts are held in the atmospheric churches of Collegio Papio in Ascona and San Francesco in Locarno—venues that lend a unique sense of intimacy to the musical experience. This year's edition also includes two evening concerts in the elegant Sala Sopracenerina on the Piazza Grande.

The major orchestras

The festival opens on **September 2** with the **Chamber Orchestra of Europe**, conducted by **Robin Ticciati**. The program pays tribute to 20th-century music, journeying between Europe and America with works by Gershwin, Weill, Stravinsky, and Bernstein. Star of the evening is acclaimed soprano **Golda Schulz**, making her debut in Ascona.

Other major orchestras follow:

On **September 19**, the **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** conducted by **Gianandrea Noseda** will perform Schumann's *Symphony No. 2* and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 5* with **Francesco Piemontesi** as soloist.

On **September 23**, the **Budapest Festival Orchestra** conducted by **Iván Fischer** will perform Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* and a *Dance Suite*, composed by Fischer himself, with violinist **Guy Braunstein**—also making his Ascona debut.

September 26 features the **Orchestra della Svizzera italiana** under **Charles Dutoit**, performing *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* and a striking version of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, with four top pianists (three Swiss and one Italian), and the **Czech Philharmonic Choir of Brno**.

On **September 17**, the festival welcomes for the first time the ensemble **Il Pomo d'Oro**, led by the charismatic **Maxim Emelyanychev**. The Mozart-themed concert includes *Symphonies Nos. 11 and 38 (Prague)* and the *Piano Concerto KV 488*, with Emelyanychev as a soloist on the fortepiano.

The closing concert on **October 23** is entrusted to one of the leading and most beloved early music ensembles in Ascona: the **Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra**, conducted by **Ton Koopman**, joined by four vocal soloists in Handel's three-act oratorio *Athalia*.



Chamber music events

Eagerly awaited by the Ascona Music Weeks audience, the chamber music concerts promise to be equally memorable.

On **10 September**, **Le Consort**, making its debut in Ascona, will present a captivating Baroque programme focusing on little-known French female composers.

The *Incontri – Chamber Music* mini-series offers two special evenings:

On **September 28**, **Chouchane Sironassian** (violin) and **Sonia Wieder-Atherton** (cello) will perform solo works by Bach and later join forces for *Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Cello*.

On **September 29**, celebrated pianist **Sir Andrés Schiff** returns to Ascona after ten years, performing Schubert's rarely played "*Grand Duo*" *Sonata* for four hands with **Francesco Piemontesi**.

Other unmissable highlights include:

A piano recital on **October 2** by the legendary **Piotr Anderszewski**, performing a selection of Brahms's *Klavierstücke*, *Fantasiën* and *Intermezzi*, and Bartók's *14 Bagatelles*.

The much-awaited return on **October 6** of **Mala Punica**, a vocal-instrumental ensemble that captivated audiences last year. Their program *Oy Chanter* offers a fascinating journey through medieval music and its modern reinterpretations by composer Pablo Ortiz.

Also in the program:

The debut of **Quatuor Diotima** on **October 14**; the *Début* concert on **October 18** featuring two promising young artists: cellist **Stephanie Huang** and pianist **Guillaume Bellom**; the traditional **family concert** on **September 27**, with the chamber ensemble of the Rossini Symphony Orchestra of Pesaro performing Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*.

To mark the 80th anniversary, a special event will be held on Sunday, **September 14**: the Municipality of Ascona will offer a free concert featuring the **Festival Strings Lucerne**, symbolizing the bond between Switzerland's two oldest music festivals.

Tickets, presale, and information

Ticket prices range from CHF 20 to 140

Free admission to all concerts for attendees under 26.

Presale begins May 7 via Ticketcorner.

Official website: www.settimane-musicali.ch



Sponsors

The Ascona Music Weeks Foundation thanks:

Ascona Locarno Turismo, Municipality of Ascona, Association of Friends of the Music Weeks, and Patriziato Ascona

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Programme

SEPTEMBER

Di 2. Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Robin Ticciati (conductor), Golda Schultz (soprano)

Schreker, Gershwin, Weill, Stravinsky, Korngold, Bernstein

Mi 10. Le Consort

Duval, Laurent, Barrière, Rameau, de la Chaussée, Masse, Couperin, Royer, Dall'Abaco, Vivaldi, Guésdon de Presles, Jacquet de la Guerre

So 14. Festival Strings Lucerne

Mozart, Schumann, Tchaikovsky

Mi 17. Il Pomo d'Oro

Maxim Emelyanychev (conductor, fortepiano)

Mozart

Fr 19. Mahler Chamber Orchestra

Gianandrea Noseda (conductor), Francesco Piemontesi (piano)

Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Schumann



Di 23. Budapest Festival Orchestra
Dir. **Ivan Fischer**, **Guy Braunstein** (violin)
Mozart, Fischer, Beethoven

Fr 26. Orchestra della Svizzera italiana
Coro Filarmonico di Brno
Charles Dutoit (conductor), pianists: **G. Leporatti**, **O. Schnyder**, **C. Pescia**, **T. Gheorghiu**
Stravinsky

Sa 27. Lo Schiaccianoci – Spettacolo per famiglie
Solisti Orchestra Sinfonica G. Rossini

So 28. Chouchane Siranossian (violino), **Sonia Wieder-Atherton** (cello)
Bach, Ravel

Mo 29. Sir Andrés Schiff & Francesco Piemontesi (piano)
Schubert

OCTOBER

Do 2. Piotr Anderszewski (piano)
Brahms, Bartók

Mo 6. Mala Punica
de Cypro, Ciconia, da Perugia, Ortiz

Di 14. Quatuor Diotima
Beethoven, Furrer, Debussy

Sa 18. Guillaume Bellom (piano), **Stéphanie Huang** (cello)
Schumann, Fauré, Franck

Do 23. Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir
Ton Koopman (conductor), *with solosists*
Händel