

LUCERNE FESTIVAL

PIANO FEST

29.05. – 01.06.2025

Igor Levit | Iveta Apkalna | Chilly Gonzales | Malakoff Kowalski |
Lucerne Festival Orchestra | Johanna Summer

Program

Founding Partners

Berthold Herrmann &
Mariann Grawe-Gerber

CLAVIATOR MAXIMUS

When Igor Levit performed Beethoven's *Sinfonia eroica* in Franz Liszt's version for piano at the 2024 Piano Fest, you could not help but wonder whether this pianist had twelve fingers instead of the normal ten. The hyper-virtuoso Liszt transcribed Beethoven's symphonies with his own limitless possibilities in mind – his son-in-law Hans von Bülow once called him the "Claviator maximus." But Levit has no need to shy away from Liszt and so, to open the 2025 Piano Fest, will continue this daring journey by playing the Seventh Symphony, the "apotheosis of the dance," whose finale seems to spin out of control into a sheer frenzy. Just like Liszt, Johannes Brahms was also able to conjure from the piano keys "an orchestra of lamenting and jubilant voices," as his mentor Robert Schumann put it when Brahms played for him in the fall of 1853 – a very apt description, indeed, of the four Ballades, Op. 10, composed not long after. Schumann himself is represented on Levit's program by the great C major Fantasy, Op. 17: a musical declaration of love to his bride Clara Wieck and the "most passionate thing I ever made," as Schumann affirmed.



Thu 29.05.

Piano Recital Igor Levit

18.30

KKL Luzern, Concert Hall

Igor Levit piano

Johannes Brahms

Ballades, Op. 10

22 min

Robert Schumann

Fantasy in C major, Op. 17

30 min

Ludwig van Beethoven/Franz Liszt

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92

40 min

CHF 150/120/80/50/30

Introduction to the Concert

17.30 | KKL Luzern, Auditorium

with **Susanne Stähr** (in German)

A CLASS OF HIS OWN

Sometimes he sits at the piano and plays solo pieces that seem almost classical, tracing melodies that you simply can't get out of your head. Sometimes he becomes a subversive rapper. Or he might spend some time opening our eyes and ears with a brief excursion into music theory. On his penultimate album, *French Kiss*, he even sang in French in homage to "la grande Nation." He has collaborated with such pop stars as Feist, Drake, Peaches, and Jarvis Cocker and won a Grammy Award together with the electro duo Daft Punk. Oh, and he happens to hold the Guinness World Record for longest solo performance: he played for more than 27 hours at an event in Paris in 2009. It's not that easy to pin down Jason Beck, aka Chilly Gonzales. But despite his prolific discography, one thing is clear: this unique piano entertainer is best experienced live onstage, where he prefers to wear a bathrobe and slippers. You never know what to expect from Chilly Gonzales — but it will definitely be entertaining! In Lucerne, Chilly Gonzales will perform with the young violinist Yannick Hiwat, presenting hits from his *Solo Piano* trilogy and other pieces.



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Fri 30.05.

Chilly Gonzales

19.30

KKL Luzern, Concert Hall

Chilly Gonzales piano and vocals

Yannick Hiwat violin and synthesizer

Chilly Gonzales

music from the albums *Solo Piano I, II, and III* in new arrangements as well as new works

This concert has no intermission.

The concert will end at about 21.30.

CHF 150/130/100/80/60/30

QUEEN OF THE ORGAN

The organ, at least as far as the popular image goes, seems to be in its element only in a church setting — often you can't even see who is playing or how they are producing the sounds. But not so when it comes to the Latvian organist Iveta Apkalna, who has been shining a limelight on the instrument in the great concert halls. Which is why she will not be taking her place in the choir loft in front of the organ pipes in the KKL Luzern but at a console right on the stage. Apkalna has helped the "king of instruments" achieve fresh heights of glory, thanks not only to her phenomenal virtuosity and musicality but to her effect as a charismatic performer as well. When she was once asked why she bid adieu to the piano and turned to the organ, Apkalna replied that she preferred to work with her whole body, including her feet, hips, stomach, and back. And so she dances over manuals and pedals — a spectacle for ears and eyes alike — and, along the way, shows that the magnificent organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach and of contemporary American Minimalist composer Philip Glass have more in common than you might think: both are about transcendence and drive.



Sat 31.05.

Organ Recital Iveta Apkalna

17.00

KKL Luzern, Concert Hall

Iveta Apkalna organ

Philip Glass

Act III (conclusion) from the opera
Satyagraha

arranged for organ by Michael Riesman

Music in Contrary Motion

Mad Rush

total 35 min

Johann Sebastian Bach

Pièce d'Orgue in G major, BWV 572

Passacaglia in C minor, BWV 582

Chaconne from the Partita in

D minor for solo violin, BWV 1004

arranged for organ by Matthias Keller

total 40 min

This concert has no intermission.

CHF 90/60/30

Introduction to the Concert

16.00 | KKL Luzern, Auditorium

with **Susanne Stähr** (in German)

SONGS & PIANO

From the outset, Igor Levit has conceived of his Piano Fest as the broadest possible celebration of this versatile keyboard instrument. Which is why illuminating the piano's role as accompaniment to the singing voice is also a must. But in lieu of Schubert, Brahms, or Strauss, we hear the premiere of Malakoff Kowalski's new album. The musician with the Hamburg sailor's cap, who so stylishly walks a fine line between pop, jazz, and classical music, will introduce himself as a singer. He will pair piano miniatures by classical composers with poems by the American Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, which he has reinterpreted "syllable by syllable, line by line" as song lyrics, as Kowalski explains. "As intimate vocals, these texts strictly follow what the piano in the original, unmodified version presents as melody and harmony." The result sounds like a cross between Tom Waits and David Bowie, Bill Evans and Kurt Weill. Kowalski will perform his *Songs with Words* with a true supergroup: Johanna Summer, who thrilled us in the last two editions of Piano Fest with her improvisations on Bach, Beethoven, and other composers, will be at the piano alongside Igor Levit and Chilly Gonzales.



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Sat 31.05.

Kowalski, Levit, Summer & Gonzales

20.00

KKL Luzern, Concert Hall

Malakoff Kowalski vocals

Igor Levit piano

Johanna Summer piano

Chilly Gonzales piano

Malakoff Kowalski

Songs with Words

miniatures by Chopin, Schumann, Khachaturian, Ravel, Grieg, Beach, Tailleferre, Debussy, and Fauré, combined with sung poetry by Allen Ginsberg

world premiere

In between, Igor Levit, Johanna Summer, Chilly Gonzales, and Malakoff Kowalski will play solo pieces of their own choice.

This concert has no intermission.
The concert will end at about 21.30.

CHF 120/100/80/50/30

MOZART'S MAGIC

Not even the Lucerne Festival Orchestra can decline an invitation from Igor Levit. Between the Spring and Summer Festivals, the much-admired ensemble will perform yet again, this time focusing on Wolfgang Amadé Mozart. At the center of the closing concert is one of his most original piano concertos, *Jenamy*, which the legendary pianist Alfred Brendel once called a “wonder of the world.” Mozart wrote it at the age of 21 for the Parisian pianist Louise Victoire Jenamy, who must have been a fabulous virtuoso — to judge from the solo part, which whirls across the keys. But Mozart presents a heart-rending lament in the central movement that plunges into profound regions of the soul — Igor Levit refers to its “breathtaking depths.” By contrast, the *Serenata notturna* that opens the program displays an attitude of playing for the sheer pleasure of playing: no shadows are cast on this cheerfully entertaining music. The *Haffner Symphony* will conclude the program with vibrantly energetic musical fireworks — along with a quote from the composer’s opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, in which Osmin boasts that he will triumph. Mozart knew exactly how to entice his audience.



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Sun 01.06.

Igor Levit & Lucerne Festival Orchestra

17.00

KKL Luzern, Concert Hall

Lucerne Festival Orchestra

Raphael Christ concertmaster and
musical direction

Igor Levit piano

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart

Serenade in D major, K. 239

Serenata notturna

13 min

Piano Concerto in E-flat major,

K. 271 *Jenamy*

33 min

Symphony in D major, K. 385 *Haffner*

22 min

This concert has no intermission.

CHF 170/130/90/60/40

Introduction to the Concert

16.00 | KKL Luzern, Auditorium

with **Susanne Stähr** (in German)