

Back to the Roots

A Foreword by Daniel Hope

The summer of 2026 marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Menuhin Festival Gstaad—and, at the same time, a return to its roots. For this place, where music has flourished for seven decades, has never been just a festival. It has always been a family.

Under this year's theme, Family Matters, we celebrate the many meanings of family—those into which we are born and those we discover through music. Family is about trust, shared experience and a sense of belonging, values that Yehudi Menuhin embodied like few others.

Those values continue to define Gstaad today: in the encounters between generations, in the friendships forged both on and off the stage, and in the passing on of knowledge, inspiration and artistic experience.

Our 2026 season is a celebration of exactly that—of coming together through music.

We open the Festival with Pinchas Zukerman, an artist who has been closely connected to my own musical journey for many decades. Zubin Mehta and Pinchas Zukerman share an extraordinary musical family bond, exemplifying the continuity, friendship and artistic generosity that have always been at the heart of this Festival.

One of the highlights of the season is the continuation of our collaboration with Jaap van Zweden and the Gstaad Festival Orchestra, now strengthened through a new three-year partnership that will culminate in a major European tour in autumn 2026. We are equally delighted to welcome the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko for performances of works by Mahler and Tchaikovsky, as well as Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. The Budapest Festival Orchestra, the Royal Danish Orchestra, and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra will also return to Gstaad, each bringing its own distinctive artistic voice.

The season features an exceptional line-up of artists, including Khatia Buniatishvili, Daniil Trifonov, Sir András Schiff, Iván Fischer, Gabriela Montero, Thomas Hampson, Regula Mühlemann, Bomsori Kim, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Steven Isserlis, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, Marie Jacquot, Alexander Shelley and Maurice Steger, to name just a few.

Opera also takes centre stage this summer. International tenor Benjamin Bernheim stars in Puccini's *La bohème* under the baton of the acclaimed Marco Armiliato, in a production that begins its journey in Gstaad before continuing at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden.

Supporting the next generation of musicians remains especially close to my heart. Through our Vocal Academy with Thomas Hampson, Piano Academy with Sir András Schiff, String Academy with Pinchas Zukerman, and Conducting Academy led by Jaap van Zweden, Alexander Shelley and Johannes Schlaefli, experience meets curiosity, and artistic mastery inspires new beginnings.

Programmes such as Next Generation, Academy Live, and Music for Gstaad create opportunities for young artists to grow while demonstrating music's unique power to connect people.

New initiatives—including The Summit, the Beethoven Friendship Award, and the President's Hikes—continue Yehudi Menuhin's vision of music as dialogue, as a bridge between cultures, and as a source of inspiration for a shared future. At the Ciné Théâtre Gstaad, a new film series explores the life and legacy of Yehudi Menuhin alongside other remarkable musical personalities, offering a cinematic tribute to our heritage.

Family Matters is therefore far more than this season's theme—it is a way of thinking. At a time when the world is changing at extraordinary speed, we want to demonstrate that music creates community, inspires hope and transcends boundaries.

For me personally, this summer brings my own journey full circle. As a child, I had the privilege of growing up here, close to Yehudi Menuhin, who taught me that music is humanity in action. Today, it is both an honour and a responsibility to continue his legacy—here in these mountains, surrounded by a family of artists, friends and audiences who come together to celebrate what unites us all: music.



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