

Press release

Gstaad, 18 August 2026

The Beethoven Friendship Award Goes to Iván Fischer

Hungarian conductor and composer Iván Fischer is the recipient of the Beethoven Friendship Award, presented this year for the second time. The award recognizes his intensive artistic engagement with Ludwig van Beethoven. The prize was presented to Iván Fischer by Daniel Hope, president of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and intendant of the Menuhin Festival Gstaad, on Sunday, August 16, 2026, as part of the Menuhin Festival Gstaad.

As co-founder and Music Director of the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Iván Fischer has written one of the greatest success stories in the international orchestral world. Through worldwide tours and a series of acclaimed recordings, including numerous Beethoven recordings and complete cycles, he has also earned an outstanding reputation as an interpreter of Beethoven.

“Iván Fischer is regarded as an orchestral innovator who combines traditional approaches with contemporary thinking. His thoughtful Beethoven programmes and interpretations have repeatedly attracted international attention and made their mark on the history of interpretation,” explains Daniel Hope in his justification for the choice of award recipient. “He places particular emphasis on the value of collective music-making and on the conviction that every interpretation emerges from the shared creativity of all the musicians involved.”

The award is an initiative of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and the Wegeler wineries, with the support of leading European wine producers. The inspiration for the award is a friendship glass that Ludwig van Beethoven presented to his childhood friend from Bonn, Franz Gerhard Wegeler, in 1816. Today, the glass is on display in the permanent exhibition at the Beethoven-Haus.

Award Ceremony at the Menuhin Festival Gstaad

Iván Fischer personally accepted the award on August 16, 2026, during his concert with the Budapest Festival Orchestra at the Gstaad Festival Tent. The laudatory speech was delivered by Daniel Hope, Artistic Director of the Menuhin Festival and President of the Beethoven-Haus, in the presence of numerous representatives of the Beethoven-Haus and the participating wineries. Among them was Felix Wegeler, a descendant of Beethoven's childhood friend Franz Gerhard Wegeler. The evening's programme featured

Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* and his *Piano Concerto No. 3*, with Isata Kanneh-Mason as soloist, as well as Mahler's *Symphony No. 1, Titan*.

The Beethoven Friendship Award consists of a handcrafted replica of the Beethoven Friendship Glass, as well as twelve carefully selected rarities from the cellars of the participating wineries – each magnum bottle an icon of European wine culture. The Friendship Glass and the magnum bottles are displayed in a specially designed wine cabinet by Italian architect and designer Michele De Lucchi. Produced in a limited edition by the workshop of the Beethoven-Haus, the cabinet is modelled on a wine barrel and made of black oxidised oak. It is also available for purchase through Feinkost Käfer.

The Beethoven Friendship Award honours artists who have made an outstanding contribution to musical culture and share a passion for wine. It is awarded on the initiative of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and the Wegeler wineries, with the support of ten wineries that rank among the most renowned wine producers in Europe. These include Domaine Paul Jaboulet Aîné, Rhône; Tenuta di Trinoro Vini Franchetti, Tuscany; Paul Fürst, Franconia; Château Lascombes, Bordeaux; Domaine Champagne Laurent-Perrier, Champagne; Erwin Sabathi, Styria; Schloss Gobelsburg, Kamptal; Château Smith Haut Lafitte, Bordeaux; Vega Sicilia, Ribera del Duero; Weingut Krone, Rheingau; and Weingut Wegeler, Moselle. The first recipient of the award was composer and conductor Tan Dun in 2025.



Iván Fischer (centre), recipient of the Beethoven Friendship Award, presented for the second time, and Daniel Hope (left), President of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn and Artistic Director of the Menuhin Festival Gstaad, at the ceremony. (Photo: Raphael Faux)

About the Beethoven-Haus GmbH

The Beethoven-Haus Vertriebs- und Service GmbH is the commercially oriented shop, ticket and service centre associated with the non-profit cultural institution Beethoven-Haus Bonn. The company sells museum and concert tickets as well as publications from the Beethoven-Haus, and also organises its own concerts. It furthermore offers a wide range of books, recordings, films and merchandise related to Beethoven and classical music. A special product is the BTHVN Charta Riesling produced by the Wegeler wineries. The company's profits are used to finance the non-profit work of the Beethoven-Haus Bonn association.

About the Wegeler wineries

The Wegeler wineries were founded as a family-run business in 1882. In 2021, the wineries were sold to the parent company Villa FORTUNA WEINE Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH. The main owners are Ralf Frenzel and Torsten Vogt. The Wegeler wineries comprise three locations along the Rhine and Moselle, united by a passion for Riesling. A small but exquisite share of Pinot Noir has complemented the company since the acquisition of Weingut Krone Assmannshausen.

About the Menuhin Festival Gstaad

Founded in 1957 by Yehudi Menuhin, the Menuhin Festival Gstaad is one of Europe's leading classical music festivals. Every summer, it brings together internationally renowned artists, distinguished orchestras and outstanding young musicians in the churches and concert venues of the Saanenland and Pays-d'Enhaut regions. With more than 75 concerts each year, the Festival combines artistic excellence, talent development and cultural exchange in one of Europe's most beautiful alpine settings. Through its Academies, Discovery programme and educational initiatives, it is committed to supporting the next generation of musicians and making classical music accessible to a broad audience. Since 2026, the Festival has been under the artistic direction of violinist Daniel Hope. The 70th is currently underway until 5 September 2026 under the theme *Family Matters*.

Further information and tickets

menuhin.ch

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