



## The Lucerne Festival

Music in Switzerland's loveliest city

**31 August–5 September 2025**

**(ML 764)**

**6 days • £4,950**

**(including tickets to 5 performances)**

**Lecturer: Dr Michael Downes**

A summer music festival of the first rank on the beautiful shores of Lake Lucerne.

Performers in 2025 include, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra with Klaus Mäkelä (conductor), and the Berliner Philharmoniker with Kirill Petrenko (conductor).

Guided walks and an excursion in the surrounding hills are balanced with plenty of free time.

Ever since its inauguration over eighty years ago, with a concert conducted by Arturo Toscanini in the grounds of the lakeside house where Wagner had stayed, the Lucerne Festival has been regarded as one of the most prestigious music festivals in Europe.

The event has been further enhanced by a brilliant venue. The KKL (Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern) is a giant glass-and-steel arts complex located right on the lake just a few hundred yards from the old town of Lucerne. Designed by Frenchman Jean Nouvel and completed in 2000, this is modern European architecture at its finest. Its colossal cantilevered roof projects over the water's edge, bringing the changing moods of the lake right into the building, and water channels separate the various wings. The most advanced acoustical science has been lavished on the beautiful Konzertsaal.

And could there be a lovelier city in which to attend a summer music festival? Lucerne occupies one of the most picturesque settings in Switzerland, divided into two parts by its river, bordering on the dramatic shores of the Vierwaldstätter Lake and overlooked by craggy mountains. Its medieval prosperity is still visible in the squares, guildhalls and churches that line its riverbanks. The nineteenth century was a heyday for Lucerne as it led the way in attracting tourism to Switzerland.



Lucerne, wood engraving c. 1890.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at midday from London Heathrow to Zurich (Swiss Airlines). Drive to Lucerne, a lively, historic city amid lake and mountain.

**Day 2.** Morning walking tour of Lucerne, starting at the oldest road bridge in Europe, the richly decorated Chapel Bridge, and continuing to the Spreuerbrücke, another historic covered bridge notable for its 'Dance of Death' roof panels. Visit the Rococo interior of the huge Jesuit Church and the Hofkirche, a 17th-century church with a lovely Italianate cloister and two Romanesque towers. The city's chief 19th-century monument, the famous Löwendenkmal, is a great lion-statue hewn from a cliff-face in 1821 in honour of Swiss mercenaries killed in the French Revolution. Early dinner before an *evening concert at the KKL with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra with Klaus Mäkelä (conductor): Schubert/Berio, Rendering for orchestra; Mahler, Symphony No. 5.*

**Day 3.** A morning visit to the Sammlung Rosengart, an extraordinary collection devoted to 20th-century art including many works by Picasso. *Lunchtime concert at the Lukaskirche with David Nebel (violin) and pianist (to be confirmed): Mozart, Violin Sonata in A, K. 402; Shostakovich, Unfinished Violin Sonata; Franck, Violin Sonata in A; Brahms, Scherzo from the FAE Sonata.*

Optional afternoon visit to Richard Wagner's home on a headland by the lake where the composer spent some of his happiest years. *Evening concert at the KKL with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Kirill Petrenko (conductor) and Albrecht Meyer (oboe): Webern, Passacaglia for orchestra, Op. 1; Zimmermann, Concerto for oboe and small orchestra; Brahms, Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68.*

**Day 4.** All-day excursion to Mount Rigi, traversing lake Lucerne by boat and taking the funicular to the start of the walk. Lunch on the mountainside with a majestic 360° panorama of the Swiss plateau before returning to Lucerne for some free time. *Evening concert at the KKL with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Kirill Petrenko (conductor): Mahler, Symphony No. 9.*

**Day 5.** Cross lake Lucerne again to Villa Senar, the former home of Sergei Rachmaninoff, recently opened to the public, where he wrote *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and *Symphony No. 3*. Free afternoon before an early dinner. *Evening concert at the KKL with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Maxim Emelyanychev (conductor) and Tabea Zimmermann (viola): Mozart, Symphony in D major, K. 133; Bartók, Viola Concerto, Sz 120; Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64.*

**Day 6.** Drive to Zurich Airport for the return flight to London Heathrow, arriving in the early afternoon.

## The Lucerne Festival continued

### Lecturer

**Dr Michael Downes.** Director of Music at the University of St Andrews, musical director of St Andrews Chorus, Scotland's largest choral society, and founding artistic director of Byre Opera. He has lectured for most of the UK's leading opera companies and writes programme notes for Wigmore Hall and Aldeburgh Music. Publications include books written with and about contemporary British composer Jonathan Harvey, and a collaboration with Nike Wagner, great-granddaughter of Richard. *Story of the Century*, his new book on Wagner's *Ring*, was published in November 2024 by Faber and Faber; his next project is a biography of Elgar, to be published by Oxford University Press.

### Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £4,950 or £4,730 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £5,460 or £5,240 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with Swiss Airlines (Airbus 220-300); private coach travel; breakfasts and 4 dinners with wine; admissions; all tips for drivers, waiters and local guides; state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Music:** tickets (first category) for 5 concerts are included, costing c. £1,060. Tickets are confirmed in March.

**Accommodation: Romantik Hotel Wilden Mann** (wilden-mann.ch): 4-star hotel dating back to the 13th century located in the heart of the historic town centre. All double rooms in the hotel have two single mattresses on one bed frame, as is the usual style in Switzerland. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use. The hotel does not have air-conditioning but fans can be provided in particularly warm weather.*

**How strenuous?** A good level of fitness is necessary. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. The concert hall is located half a mile from the hotel. The drive from Zurich Airport to Lucerne takes approximately 1 hour.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.

**Combine this tour with:** *The Schubertiade*, 22–28 August 2025.