



## Music on Lake Maggiore

Ascona's distinguished Settimane Musicali festival

**23–28 September 2026 (MM 182)**

6 days

Speaker: Dr Paul Max Edlin

Combine the stunning scenery of Lake Maggiore with world-class music at the 81st iteration of Settimane Musicali di Ascona.

Performances by star soloists Cecilia Bartoli, Sol Gabetta, Vilde Frang and Nemanja Radulović, with the ensembles Les Musiciens du Prince, Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, and Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana.

Top category tickets to four evening concerts, and a private reception with the Artistic Director of the festival.

In 1946, Ascona's first *Settimana Musicale* (literally 'music week') took place in a small dance hall; the idea of a local lawyer and his pianist friend. In the eight decades since this humble post-war start, it has hosted some of the finest international musicians, with past concerts featuring Anne-Sophie Mutter, Daniel Barenboim, Claudio Abbado and Riccardo Muti. Now, the annual festival ranks highly among the other great European festivals and continues to attract the highest calibre of artist, welcoming musicians and visitors alike to the highly attractive small towns of Ascona and Locarno on the north-western coast of Lake Maggiore. Today, concerts are held in two lovely churches with other events taking place in a variety of venues.

Under the auspices of new Artistic Director Christoph Müller, the 2026 programme of concerts, masterclasses and community projects is highly ambitious. The churches of the Collegio Papio di Ascona and San Francesco di Locarno are the venues for the music, highlights of which include Cecilia Bartoli in Gluck's *Orfeo & Euridice* and Elgar's cello concerto with Sol Gabetta.

In addition to the festival concert programme, there is much to explore in the Ticino, this little known, Italian-speaking canton of southern Switzerland that encompasses the northernmost tip of Lake Maggiore. Excursions are included to the nearby Monte Verità, an artistic commune set up in the early 20th century; across the lake by boat to the Brissago islands, to visit the richly planted island garden; and to a local wine producer. Also included is a private reception with the Artistic Director and one of the performers on the festival.



The spire of Chiesa Collegio Papio di Ascona (© Tom Gower).

The sheer pleasure of lakeside scenery, with the Swiss Alps rising magnificently above the Mediterranean charm of cobbled streets and clear waters, is already reason enough to visit, but combined with first-class music, this is a unique chance to discover this charming and thriving artistic location.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 10.30am from London Heathrow to Milan Linate (British Airways) and drive to Ascona where all five nights are spent.

**Day 2: Monte Verità.** Start the day with a visit to the nearby Monte Verità with its far-reaching views of Lake Maggiore and Ascona below. Once home to a utopian colony of artists and intellectuals seeking an 'alternative' life, it now houses a series of exhibitions, some designed by curator and artist Harald Szeemann. Late-afternoon talk at the hotel and dinner. *Evening concert at Chiesa Collegio Papio Ascona with Vilde Frang (violin) & friends: Hungarian Folk (full programme tbc).*

**Day 3: Brissago Islands.** Morning talk followed by a boat trip to the Isole di Brissago. In 1885 the baroness Antoinette Saint Leger transformed the islands into a residence

where painters, sculptors, musicians and writers could meet. Lunch is included at the largest island, which is open to the public as a botanical park. Return to Ascona for some free time before a short drive to Locarno. *Evening concert in the Chiesa di San Francesco with Nemanja Radulović (violin), Krzysztof Urbaniński (conductor), Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana: Tchaikovsky, Violin Concerto in D major, Op.35; Symphony No.6 'Pathétique', Op. 74.*

**Day 4.** Private reception with the Artistic Director of the festival, Christoph Müller. The rest of the day is free before a short transfer to Locarno. *Evening concert in the Chiesa di San Francesco: Gluck's Orfeo & Euridice, with Cecilia Bartoli (Orfeo), Mélissa Petit (Euridice & Amor), Gianluca Capuano (conductor) and Les Musiciens du Prince Montecarlo.*

**Day 5.** Morning talk in the hotel, followed by a visit and wine tasting at a local vineyard. The Ticino region is famous for its wine, particularly its high-quality Merlot. Drinks reception before transferring to Locarno. *Early-evening concert in the Chiesa di San Francesco with Sol Gabetta (cello), Aurel Dawidiuk (conductor), Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen: Elgar, Cello Concerto Op.85; Brahms, Symphony No.1, Op.68.* Return to Ascona for the final dinner.

**Day 6.** Drive to Milan Linate airport and fly to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 5.00pm.

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

## Lecturer

**Dr Paul Max Edlin.** Paul has taught in universities for over 30 years, most recently as a professor and then as Director of Music at Queen Mary University of London. He has been Artistic Director of both Sounds New Contemporary Music Festival and Deal Music and Arts. He was also Director of International Composer Pyramid, which has supported some of the world's finest young composers at the start of their careers. His music, encompassing ballet, orchestral to chamber and instrumental to electronic, has been composed for and performed by some of the world's finest musicians and ensembles. He is a trustee of several arts charities, including Ora Singers, City Music Foundation, Cantoris Charitable Trust and China-UK International Music Festival. In 2022 he moved permanently to Tuscany so he could concentrate on his work as a composer.

## Practicalities

**Included:** top category tickets to 4 performances; travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 1 lunch, and 3 dinners, with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Music:** 4 concert tickets are included (top category).

**Accommodation. Romantik Hotel Castello Seeschloss** ([castello-seeschloss.ch/en](http://castello-seeschloss.ch/en)): a 4-star hotel with a well-recommended restaurant, located on the edge of Lake Maggiore. The hotel is made up of several buildings including the remains of the 13th-century castle. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** There is a fair amount of walking, much of it on roughly paved and streets and in warm weather conditions. The visits require sure-footedness and a degree of fitness is needed to explore the area. There are late nights throughout the tour due to the concert times, especially on the final night when dinner is served after the concert. Most mornings start at c. 10.00am. Average distance by coach per day (excluding the journeys of c. 80 miles to and from the airport): c. 6 miles.