

Media Release

Board of Trustees Elects Markus Hongler as Chairman and Reports Favorable Overall Results for 2019

Lucerne, 13 December 2019. Lucerne Festival's Board of Trustees today elected Markus Hongler as Chairman, who, as previously announced, had been proposed for that position, and in addition reported very favorable overall results for the year 2019. The Board of Trustees thanked Michael Haefliger and his team for the work they have accomplished and unanimously expressed full confidence in the Executive and Artistic Director. The Board additionally supported the decisions that have been taken regarding the allegations made against Michael Haefliger.

Markus Hongler, CEO of the insurance company La Mobilière and a member of the Board of Trustees since 2011, has been elected unanimously. Commenting on his election, he said: "I am very pleased by this election and am fully aware of the responsibility it entails. We would very much have preferred that this change in the Festival's chairmanship had transpired without discordance. Unfortunately, things turned out differently, which we deeply regret. Together with the Board of Trustees, I intend to analyze these developments of the past several weeks with great care. But most importantly, together with Michael Haefliger and his team, I will work to inspire the Festival's visitors with music of the highest artistic quality, to continue promoting innovation in music and the formats in which it is presented, and to preserve the Festival's economic autonomy."

Apart from the resignation of Hubert Achermann, there have been no other changes in the composition of the Board of Trustees of Lucerne Festival. Markus Hongler, together with the long-standing members Elisabeth Oltramare and Otto Wyss, will also become a member of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation Friends of Lucerne Festival, from which Hubert Achermann as well as Corinna von Schönau-Riedweg and Dr. Michel Stadlin have resigned.

The 2019 Festival year was characterized by numerous artistic highlights and by a high attendance rate, from which favorable financial results can be inferred. The Summer Festival concluded with 91% total average seating capacity for the 64 events for which tickets were sold and tallied 72,700 concertgoers for all of the events that took place. Highlights included the sold-out Mozart-Da Ponte cycle featuring Teodor Currentzis and musicAeterna as well as their collaboration with Cecilia Bartoli, which were among the Festival's 29 symphony concerts performed by the most renowned international orchestras. The Summer Festival offered no fewer than 19 world premieres and a total of 25 events that featured predominantly contemporary music. 10,200 music fans attended the Festival's 23 free events, such as the moderated "40min" concert series that took place in the early evening before the main concerts and the world music festival known as "In the Streets."

Numerous concerts featuring a wide range of formations — from chamber to full orchestra — as well as varied repertoire were also performed by the Festival's in-house ensembles, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and the musicians of the Lucerne Festival Academy. Under the direction of Riccardo Chailly, an orchestra comprising the Lucerne Festival Alumni played a program of modern and contemporary works that included pieces by the Academy's Artistic Director, Wolfgang Rihm. Following their Lucerne concert, they travelled to Hamburg to give a guest performance at the Elbphilharmonie. For the Easter Festival, a total of 9,000 visitors attended, resulting in an average total seating capacity of 88% for the nine events to which tickets were sold. The Piano Festival attracted a total of 18,000 concertgoers, which surpassed the previous year's figure by 1,200, even though three fewer concerts were given this year than in 2018.

In October, the Lucerne Festival Orchestra embarked on a tour led by its Music Director Riccardo Chailly that initially took them to La Scala in Milan and then to China for a return visit, where they continued their successful residency in Shanghai for the second year in a row; they also gave concerts in Beijing and Shenzhen.

In May, Lucerne Festival also introduced a new Festival structure whereby the focus will be on the Summer Festival and the continuing development of in-house projects centered around the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, the Academy, the Alumni, and the Young programs. In addition, extended concert weekends, one each in spring and in fall, will be a part of the Festival year.

The 2020 Festival year starts with the inaugural Spring Weekend, which will take place from 1 to 4 April. It will center around the conductor Teodor Currentzis, who will present four events featuring his orchestra musicAeterna, with musicians from the Lucerne Festival Orchestra taking part as well. Lucerne Festival will announce the program for the second extended weekend, the first edition of which will take place in the fall, from 20 to 22 November, in the middle of February 2020.

Contacts for Press and Public Relations

Nina Steinhart, Head of PR | n.steinhart@lucernefestival.ch | t +41 (0)41 226 44 43