



Media Release

Helga Karen, Thomas Hong Yiu Lai, and Aurélien Gignoux named recipients of the 2020 Fritz Gerber Award, which includes scholarships to attend the 2021 Lucerne Festival Academy

Lucerne, 19 May 2020. This year's Fritz Gerber Award goes to the pianist Helga Karen, the double bassist Thomas Hong Yiu Lai, and the percussionist Aurélien Gignoux. The prize has been awarded annually since 2015 to young, highly talented musicians in connection with the Lucerne Festival Academy. Each of the three musicians will receive a cash award of CHF 10,000 as well as a scholarship that allows them to attend the Academy, which has an additional value of CHF 10,000. Because the Summer Festival and thus the Academy cannot take place this summer as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the scholarship will apply to the coming year. In the summer of 2021, Karen, Lai, and Gignoux will attend the Lucerne Festival Academy along with the winners of the 2021 Fritz Gerber Award.

The Finnish pianist **Helga Karen**, who was born in 1991, is a member of the Ensemble Lemniscate in Basel. She received a master's degree in Specialized Musical Performance in 2016 from the Basel University of Music, where she studied with such mentors as Mike Svoboda, Jürg Henneberger and Marcus Weiss, and she has taken part in master classes with Christian Dierstein, Florian Hoelscher, Nicolas Hodges, and Benjamin Kobler. She has participated in the Lucerne Festival Academy several times since 2015 and in 2018 also performed with the Orchestra of the Lucerne Festival Alumni. The double bass player **Thomas Hong Yiu Lai**, who was born in Hong Kong in 1997, is completing his master's degree in Music Education with Prof. Duncan McTier and Prof. Wies de Boevé at the Zurich University of the Arts. He received a master's degree in Musical Performance from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts with Prof. Božo Paradžik in 2019. Currently, he plays with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra as part of the Orchestra Academy. Past credits include projects with the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Zurich at Zurich Opera. The French-Swiss percussionist **Aurélien Gignoux** was born in 1997 and studied at the Paris Conservatory with Gilles Durot, Jean-Claude Gengembre, and Florent Jodelet. He has played with the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra under Vladimir Jurowski and Lorenzo Viotti. In 2019, he won the Osnabrück Music Prize, as well as second prize and the special prize for the best performance of the commissioned composition at the ARD Music Competition.

Musicians can apply for the Fritz Gerber Award via the open call for entries, and recommendations from universities and well-known artists are also accepted. This year's jury again comprised Michael Haefliger, Executive and Artistic Director of Lucerne Festival, composer and conductor Heinz Holliger, and staff members from the Lucerne Festival Academy. Young artists up to the age of 28 who are Swiss citizens or who have lived in Switzerland for at least five years are eligible to participate in the Award.

The **Fritz Gerber Foundation for Gifted Young People** has been operating since 1999. It promotes talented young people in the fields of skilled crafts and trades, culture, and athletics. Support is provided in the form of financial contributions to education, including training and advanced studies. Over the past 21 years, the Foundation has supported more than 2,300 talented young people with a total of over 27 million Swiss francs.

The Lucerne Festival Academy was founded in 2003 jointly by Pierre Boulez and Executive and Artistic Director Michael Haefliger. Wolfgang Rihm has been Artistic Director of the Academy since the summer of 2016. Highly talented young musicians from all over the world study contemporary scores and modern classics at the Academy every summer. Selected international specialists teach as lecturers.

www.lucernefestival.ch/en/lucerne-festival-academy/fritz-gerber-award

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