

HSBC  Private Bank presents

# MENUHIN FESTIVAL GSTAAD

## PRESS RELEASE

*Christoph Müller about the 2010 programme*

## Between Heaven and Earth

A concert can transport us to another world, the associations and emotional content of the music can touch our souls and carry us away from everyday life to a world of fantasies and imagination. Music can hypnotize us, putting us, so to say, somewhere between “Heaven and Earth” und stimulating us to reflect on the finite nature of our existence. Composers have been moved for centuries by the dialectic between belief in eternity and the joie de vivre of earthly life, between earthly reason and metaphysical uncertainty.

Composers in the middle ages were integrated intimately into the liturgy of the church, the majority of their music was written for the mass – except for those composers who decided to dedicate themselves to writing and performing songs of courtly love as minnesingers. But composers of sacred music often tried to fascinate their listeners with very worldly sonorities, and the minnesingers often placed more importance on religious edification than on beguiling their beloved. Both found themselves between Heaven and Earth. Claudio Monteverdi around 1600 and J.S. Bach almost two hundred years later were familiar with this dichotomy. During Monteverdi’s time one spoke of “prima prattica” with regard to works composed using traditional contrapuntal techniques, i.e., music of this world, and of “seconda prattica” with regard to works that transcended all customary compositional rules, music for the eternal heavens. Johann Sebastian Bach, on the other hand, often set the same music to sacred texts as well as to secular texts, employed parts of church cantatas in solo concertos and reworked his instrumental works into his sacred music. Since Beethoven’s time musicians and audiences alike no longer make a sharp distinction between heavenly music for the church and earthly music for concert halls, but the composer still remains with one foot in Heaven and one foot on Earth. And whoever has transmitted this feeling to audiences has created music that resounds to this day.

**András Schiff’s chamber music concerts in residence** are dedicated to birthday boy Robert Schumann (whose 200<sup>th</sup> birthday is being celebrated in 2010) with three unique concert programmes in rarely performed constellations. Schumann, who with increasing age withdrew into a personal world that remained hidden even to those closest to him, can be encountered from a less well-known side with rarely performed works such as the “Pilgrimage of the Rose” or the “Spanish Song Book”.

The musical beauty and fascination of **Brahms’ “German Requiem”** performed by outstanding soloists and interpreters on the opening weekend will be a first highlight.

Works such as **Richard Strauss’ “Metamorphoses”**, **Haydn’s “Seven Last Words”**, **Schumann’s three string quartets**, **Mahler’s fifth symphony** (with the famous Adagietto that was the basis for the film “Death in Venice”), the programme centering around the **“English Nightingale”** with recorder virtuoso Maurice Steger, or Daniel Hope’s **“Air”** all touch upon the festival’s theme in various manners.

And humorous, entertaining programmes such as Blechsbaden’s **“Moonlight Serenade”** also levitate somewhere between Heaven and Earth with their art.

An important new element to the festival will be featured with the premiere of the “**Gstaad Festival Orchestra**” on 13 August 2010. Swiss composer Daniel Schnyder wrote a **symphonic meditation** for the debut of our own symphony orchestra and the prelude to the first European tour with concerts at five other European music festivals; Rimsky-Korsakov’s **Easter Overture** and Mussorgsky’s famous “**Pictures at an Exhibition**” are also on the programme.

The third “**Tout le monde du violon**” (after 2006 and 2008) will take place again this year and build up to the great finale in the festival tent which will unite leading gypsy violinists (including **Roby Lakatos & Band**) as well as dancers and singers from traditional gypsy families from Eastern Europe in a sparkling celebration. Yehudi Menuhin, who loved gypsy music and culture above all, would have felt most at home in the tumult of the closing concert in 2010, and we thus dedicate the whole “**Tout le monde du violon**” event in the coming year to Lord Menuhin’s sense of experimentation and his curiosity and love for everything new and unheard.

Our “**Gstaad Academy**” will be honored for the second time with the presence of Prof. Silvana Bazzoni-Bartoli and Cecilia Bartoli. I am very pleased that pianist András Schiff will offer a five-day master class which also will be open to the public. The “**Gstaad Vocal Academy**” will thus be joined in 2010 by the “**Gstaad Piano Academy**”.

For amateur musicians young and old we will expand our “**Play-Along**” Orchestra programme after the overwhelming success of the two Play-Along-Orchestras in 2009, now under the new name of “**Play @ Menuhin Festival Gstaad**”. Interested amateur musicians will find all the necessary information at the festival office or on our homepage.

In addition to world famous, popular artists such as Cecilia Bartoli, Valery Gergiev, Bobby McFerrin (with a solo concert!), András Schiff, Daniel Hope, Arcadi Volodos and many others who are already familiar faces in Gstaad, we also are pleased to greet new, fascinating artists of international repute for the first time in Gstaad.

The **Jeune-Etoile-Konzerte** (Young Stars Concerts) in 2009 earned widespread recognition and were greeted by great enthusiasm. For example, young American violinist **Chad Hoopes**, prize winner of the Menuhin Competition, was entrancing and can be heard in an evening concert in 2010.

We will be going new ways with regard to communication about our concerts in 2010. All of the artists performing in the festival tent or in the church in Saanen, for example, will be featured in their own “**Artist Window**” on our homepage where you thus can become better acquainted with them.

We are all looking forward to the coming exciting and challenging months. Above all we are motivated by our great anticipation for the more than 40 beautiful evening concerts in the coming summer, concerts marked by our unique and magical mixture of nature, music and luxury as to be found nowhere else in the world.

With best regards,

Christoph Müller, Intendant