

*Lac Léman*  
*Music Masterclasses*



**2016**

## *The Lac Léman Music Masterclasses 2016*

In October 2016 young, highly talented string players from all over the world met again at the Hindemith Music Centre in Blonay, Switzerland, with some of the worldwide foremost teachers of their instruments, violin, viola and violoncello, for a week of intensive studies aimed at deepening their understanding and polishing their skills in the performance of solo pieces. The pieces studied were chosen by the students themselves from a wide array of composers and periods of classical music. Supplementary to this work all students performed a piece for string chamber orchestra jointly with their professors acting as leaders of each string section.



Faithful to the principle under which LLMM operates, namely to assemble teachers and music students of the highest caliber and talent in a setting idoneous to achieving the best possible results, the 2016 course proved again to be one of the internationally significant events in top-level education in classical music. Like its predecessor courses, it was in its entirety organized by the Lac Léman Music Masterclasses Association on the basis of private efforts to create an opportunity for young musicians preparing themselves for a career in classical music to work with some of the internationally most recognized string instrument teachers available, each of them eager to transmit their knowledge and experience in the stage

performance of music to the next generation of musicians.



The 2016 masterclasses proved again to be a highlight not only of musical education itself, but also of education for humanity, as it offered a unique space for the encounter of talented young people from all corners of the globe, many of which with a potential to become leaders in their countries of origin, not only in the world of music, but in wider society as well, thereby contributing to the dissemination of a spirit of esteem and respect for cultural achievements and freedom of expression. In the present times any such indirect influence of educational efforts such as LLMM on the international understanding across borders and different traditions can hardly be overemphasized.

The 2016 masterclasses took again place at the Hindemith Music Centre in Blonay, and it is to be underlined that this beautifully located ensemble of spacious villa and park, with its facilities geared to the needs of intensive practice in classical music, provided a nearly ideal place for the conduct of the course. The Centre, while offering all the logistical appliances required for such an event, exudes an almost family-home atmosphere which facilitates very much personal interaction between course participants.

## The Teachers

The teachers of the solo masterclasses were Mihaela Martin, violin, Boris Kuschnir, violin, Nobuko Imai, viola, and Frans Helmerson, violoncello. Additionally, and as it has become customary already, the violinist Daniel Austrich, who plays together with Mihaela Martin, Nobuko Imai and Frans Helmerson in the well-known Michelangelo String Quartet, was engaged as teacher for the study of chamber music.

All these teachers need no introduction in the world of classical music as they enjoy a well-known status as some of the best available teachers for masterclasses who are highly experienced pedagogues but who also know the life of a performing artist on stage very well.

Mihaela Martin, born in Romania, counts as one of the most outstanding violin virtuosos of her generation.



As a soloist she knows the stages of all continents and has also appeared at various chamber music festivals in various music festivals all over Europe. She acts regularly as jury member in important competitions and teaches violin at the University of Music in Cologne and at the Haute École de Musique in Geneva. In addition she is a member of the Kronberg Academy Faculty since 2013.

Boris Kuschnir, of Ukrainian origin, who has won numerous prizes at international violin and chamber music competitions, after his education at the

Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire became an Austrian citizen in 1982.



He is a professor at the Music and Arts University of Vienna and at the Music University of Graz and as an active performer himself as a soloist and chamber music player has won a high reputation and recognition as a teacher who knows how to prepare his pupils for success in performing on stage.

The Japanese violist Nobuko Imai is considered to be one of the leading contemporary viola players.



She combines her international solo career which has brought her to all parts of the world, with numerous performances as a chamber musician, inter alia together with Mihaela Martin, Frans Helmerson, and Daniel Austrich in the Michelangelo String Quartet.

## The Teachers

After holding teaching positions at the conservatories in Detmold and Geneva, she continues to teach at the conservatory in Amsterdam and at the Academy "Reina Sofia" in Madrid. In addition, Nobuko Imai directs the well-known Viola Space Festival in Tokyo. She also belongs to the faculty of the Kronberg Academy.

Frans Helmerson, a Swedish cellist, plays with many well-known orchestras and receives outstanding critical acclaim for his concerts and recordings.



His love of chamber music is another driving force of his musical career. He is equally well-known as a teacher. In addition to his career as a soloist, chamber musician and conductor, Frans Helmerson has since long been active as a professor of violoncello, formerly at the conservatories of Cologne and Madrid, now as a guest professor at the Academy of Music Hanns Eisler in Berlin and as a member of the faculty of the Kronberg Academy.

The young St. Petersburg-born violinist and violist Daniel Austrich has successfully established himself both as a soloist as well as a much sought-after chamber music partner. He has played solo performances with many orchestras and played chamber music with well-known partners at many festivals in Europe and the U.S. He has been a member of the Michelangelo String Quartet since

2012 and has been teaching violin and chamber music at the conservatory in Cologne since 2015 as well as in the form of individual courses.



Mention is to be made in this context also of the accompanists or piano coaches who played and worked with the students during the masterclasses practically as much as the students themselves. They included Rusdan Alavidze from Geneva, and Katsura Mizumoto, and Dana Protopodescu, both from Brussels whose invaluable support for the course involved much more than just "accompanying" students in their performance of the pieces chosen. Without their correpitition the course could not take place.



## *The Students*

The success of LLMM reflects itself in the group of highly talented young musicians: it attracts them every year from all over the world. The 2016 course assembled some 26 students, ranging in age from 15 to 29 years, with a diverse background of national origin, including countries such as Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Ukraine, and the United States.

The students attending the masterclasses in fall 2016 were:

### ***Violin***

Niek Baa, Netherlands  
Malina Ciobanu, Romania  
Emmanuel Coppey, France  
Beatrice Gagliu, Romania  
Victoria Gelman, Israel  
Mairéad Hickey, Ireland  
Aaron Huros, Germany  
Artem Lonhinov, Ukraine  
Mathilde Milwidsky, Great Britain  
Fumika Mohri, Japan  
Miranda Nee, Canada  
Cheuk Nam Tse, Hong Kong  
Tina Vercellino, Italy  
Brieuc Vourch, France  
Claire Wells, United States



### ***Viola***

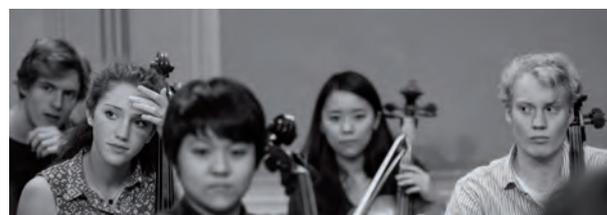
Jordan Bak, United States  
Clément Batrel-Genin, France  
Gonzalo Martin Rodríguez, Spain

Ching Han Lin, Taiwan  
José Nunes, Portugal  
Vladimir Perčević, Serbia



### ***Violoncello***

Filip Graden, Sweden  
Erica Piccotti, Italy  
Johannes Przygodda, Germany  
Tamaki Sugimoto, Japan  
Yu-Ling Wang, Taiwan



Despite a considerable variety as regards ages and levels of development all students demonstrated a high level of instrumental skills and musical performance from the outset on and showed to be truly entitled the "young soloists" of LLMM. Notwithstanding this high-level start there was a steep learning curve to be observed which demonstrated both the validity of the concept of teaching as pursued by LLMM and its teachers and the effectiveness of the informal, but rigorous process applied in selecting the students to this programme.

## Course Activities

As in the preceding years the 2016 course as well turned around three main activities: individual masterclasses, some chamber music training, and joint chamber orchestra work, the results of all such activities to be presented in concert.



The major portion of each day was dedicated to the teaching of masterclasses which provided every student with an almost daily opportunity, in a one-to-one situation, to have one of the teachers guide him through the piece which the student himself had proposed to be studied and which he



or she had prepared accordingly. Other students or even visitors from the outside may sit in and listen, but essentially it is a dialogue between the experi-

enced master and his pupil, in character most typically not top-down but face-to-face which gives the student the confidence to be able to perform and assures the best possible improvements in the performance. This approach was also taken in fall 2016 and the list of a repertoire of more than 70 different works of classical music chosen by the students and ranging from baroque pieces to contemporary compositions provides witness of the intensity and breadth of the work to be performed by teachers and correpitionists alike in preparing for and going through this core activity of the course.



Some students also engaged in the study of works of chamber music, such studies directed by Daniel Austrich. Chamber music training is of course justified completely on its own grounds since a significant part of concert activities concerns the performance of this kind of music, also for musicians who exclusively pursue a solo career. For the 2016 course four different chamber music ensembles were formed to study and towards the end of the week perform different pieces from composers such as Beethoven, Britten, Mozart, and Prokofiev in the concert given in Vevey. It was astonishing to see how quickly these groups of musicians who had never played together before adapted to the situation and learned to play together as if they were doing so already after years of joint study and training.

## Course Activities

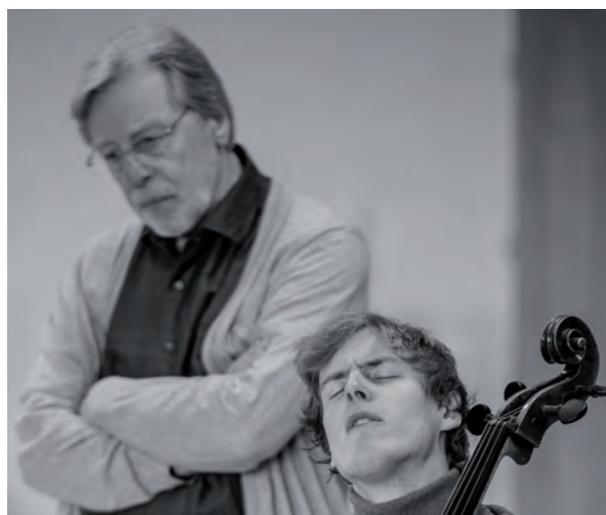
The course also included some orchestral training for all students providing them with the opportunity to play in a string chamber orchestra where instead of a conductor each string section was led by one of the course teachers. The work chosen for this year's chamber orchestra training was Edvard Grieg's Suite "Times of Holberg". The students had obviously great fun in studying this work the performance of which provided them with an opportunity to observe and experience the interaction between the teachers in putting this work together and to play the piece together with and under the leadership of their teachers.



An essential part of the course activities is of course the presentation of the works studied in concert. In addition to an internal concert presented at the Hindemith Music Centre to provide all students with the opportunity to perform the pieces chosen by them for study in the presence of others, the 2016 course showed its achievements in two public concerts, the first of which took place in Vevey at the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes, and the second which by way of tradition took place at the end of the course at the Haute École de Musique in Geneva.

On 13 of October 2016 the Michelangelo String Quartet and 4 chamber music ensembles formed by students of the masterclasses performed a concert in Vevey at the main hall of the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes which was a demonstration of the command of chamber music skills not only by the teachers but on a practically almost equal

level by the students. The works performed were Shostakovich's string quartet no. 1, a movement from Beethoven's string trio op. 87, Benjamin Britten's second string quartet, a movement from Mozart's string quintet c-minor, K. 516, and a movement from Prokofiev's first string quartet op. 50. The rapturous applause spent by the audience demonstrated how well received this astonishing performance of teachers and students was.



On 15 of October 2016 the LLMM course went to Geneva to give its yearly concert in the big hall of the Haute École de Musique. Before a packed audience the Michelangelo String Quartet played again the Shostakovich, to be followed by solo performances by students of works by Brahms, Kreisler, Panufnik, Spohr, and Schumann. It is no overstatement to state that not only the Shostakovich was presented in a masterly way, but that also the solo performances of the students were of virtuoso quality and greatly impressed the audience. After the break teachers and students together delivered a highly energetic and moving performance of Grieg's "Times of Holberg" which drew thunderous applause from an audience risen to its feet. At the farewell party thereafter everybody agreed what a wonderful experience the course had been.

## *The Lac Léman Music Masterclasses Association*

The LLMM Association is grateful, thanks to its members and to some corporate sponsors, for having received financial and other support that enabled it to conduct the 2016 course. Among its generous corporate sponsors ranged again the international law firm of Landolt & Koch in Geneva, the private bank Lombard Odier and the auction house of Tarisio. There was also a sponsor who did not wish his name to be mentioned. All these deserve to be praised for their support over a range of years which has enabled LLMM to become a recurrent and stable element in the offerings for high quality musical education in Switzerland. With a feeling of great gratitude we also note that in 2016 Lyra Foundation of Zurich supported our activities by providing students with stipends enabling them to shoulder the costs of participating in the LLMM course. Such support of the students themselves is most welcome as it insures that no student deserving to take part is left out because of geographical distance resulting in high travel costs or simply because it would be too expensive for her or him to book our course which, generally, we are not in a position to offer for free. Special thanks also go to the Hindemith Foundation which again in 2016 supported our efforts by charging reduced rates to students below the age of 26 years. And what would LLMM be without the members of its Association? We remain deeply indebted to all



these individuals who either by donations or by way of hands-on support such as offering overnight stay to our students in connection with the Geneva concert help us in a very direct way to make a course like that of 2016 happen.

But times have not become easier, corporate sponsors are more and more difficult to become engaged and the board of LLMM Association therefore reaches out to everybody who reads this to consider how he or she could mobilize others to also support our work, financially or otherwise, to help us continue the work which we started in 2011 and which has become a successful and now already regular event in the world of international musical education.

In line with the challenges faced by the LLMM Association in the future a new member has joined its executive board; two other members to whom we are very grateful for the work they have done for LLMM in the past have retired for personal reasons. The new composition of the board is as follows: Professor Pierre Tercier, Fribourg, chairman; Fabian von Schlabrendorff, lawyer in Frankfurt am Main; Li-ana Georgana, Lawyer in Geneva; Jean-David Pelot, lawyer in Lausanne; Tristan Cerf, porte-parole pour la Suisse romande, Migros.

We very much look forward to work on future projects with this team on board, all members of the board of course providing their services at a gratuitous base only.

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