

## Sion Festival 2023: record attendance, quality and temperatures

The 2023 edition of the Sion Festival was warm, colourful and emotionally charged, and remains at the top in terms of attendance and artistic quality. The 14 concerts in this 58th edition, which ended on Sunday 3 September at the Ferme-Asile in Sion, attracted some 4000 spectators, with an average occupancy rate of 80%. A large number of events drew a full house: the multi-artistic creation *L'Espérance* conceived by Roland Vouilloz and Artistic Director Pavel Vernikov, the meeting of Bach and breakdance with the Flying Steps, the legendary Misha Maisky, the dialogue between Sergei Nakariakov and the Brass Band 13 Étoiles, the chamber music programmes by Janine Jansen, the final of the International Tibor Varga Competition and the family concert with Gäetan. Despite the heatwave, more than 1000 persons attended the nine free concerts of the "Musique en fête" day in the old town of Sion, with the theme - ironically enough - "The Music that came in from the cold".

"This is perhaps one of the best editions I have ever produced", enthuses Artistic Director Pavel Vernikov. "It has achieved a perfect balance between the more 'serious' concerts, with their great musical intensity, and the more 'light-hearted' or 'popular' performances, which are always of a high artistic quality. The two approaches to Bach's music by Misha Maisky and the breakdance troupe Flying Steps provide an exemplary illustration of this mix. This edition also included programmes created specifically for the Sion Festival, born out of a dialogue with the artists, and sometimes leading to a dialogue between the arts. This aspect is very close to my heart."

"Pavel Vernikov's programmes are not only varied and of a high standard, they also bring us a great deal of emotion", says Olivier Vocat. "And our loyal audience knows just how to appreciate them, as they have once again turned out in force. The artists were welcomed by enthusiastic audiences. For the President of the Foundation Board, this year's edition "was marked by the announcement of the arrival of Janine Jansen as Artistic Co-Director, alongside Pavel Vernikov".

The first weekend featured Ukrainian and Armenian artists and composers. Victoria Poleva's *Blessed Sadness*, presented in its European premiere, opened the vast musical and visual poem staged by actor Roland Vouilloz, which sent a strong message of hope to the audience. The soundscape was carried by Pavel Vernikov, Svetlana Makarova and the Festival Orchestra. Lena Belkina, Elena Zhukova and the Ineo Quartet moved the audience with pieces of immense and sad beauty, including fragments of Iliia Razumeiko's recent *Requiem for Marioupol*. The Naghash Ensemble, Ashot Khachatourian and the Festival Orchestra reminded us of the timelessness of existential questions and the strongest emotions with John Hodian's *Songs of Exile*, a Swiss premiere.

The second week was a mixed bag: Bach met breakdance with the Flying Steps (in collaboration with the Théâtre du Crochetan); classical music coexisted in an entertaining way with other genres and arts thanks to the Bons Becs; two musical worlds came together with trumpet star Sergei Nakariakov and the European champion Brass Band 13 Étoiles; sun-drenched music from the Mediterranean basin and distant Argentina merged in the colourful show of Vincenzo Capezuto and the Soquadro Italiano. In a completely different register, Misha Maisky made the Cathedral's thousand-year-old stones resonate with his cello and mythical pages of Bach.

The third week was all about the violin and its cousins. Janine Jansen and her friends Timothy Ridout, Denis Kozhukhin and Daniel Blendulf took the audience into the hushed atmosphere of 19th-century salons, and made them feel the stirrings of Brahms's romantic soul. With the complicity of Tomo Keller, Svetlana Makarova and Ting-Ru Lai, they then took it on a journey through the fantastic soundscapes, sometimes floating, sometimes exuberant, of chamber music produced before the Great War. The Norwegian Soloists' Choir enveloped the audience in their luminous, consoling voices. Gäetan led the little spectators into a world in their image: funny, whimsical and tender.

The finals of the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition introduced spectators to some extraordinary and exceptionally young musical personalities, as the first part of the opening concert, which featured three winners of international competitions, had also done. The finalists were accompanied by Alexander Chaushian, Ashley Wass and the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra directed by Sergej Krylov.

Founded in 1964 by Tibor Varga, the Sion Festival will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year from 16 August to 1 September 2024. The programme will be created by Pavel Vernikov and Janine Jansen, who are embarking on a promising collaboration as Artistic Co-Directors.



**Sion Violon  
Musique**

Contacts:

Olivier Vocat, President of the Foundation Board, +41 (0)79 220 29 75

Fabien Girard, Administrator, +41 (0)78 648 68 18