

MICHAEL HAEFLIGER

ARTS CONSULTING

VITA

Michael Haefliger is a renowned cultural manager and musician who shaped Lucerne Festival as Executive and Artistic Director from 1999 to 2025.

Since 2026, he has been working internationally as a consultant with "Michael Haefliger Arts Consulting," currently serving as Artistic Advisor to the China Shanghai International Arts Festival in China and the Kusatsu International Summer Music Academy & Festival.

Born in 1961 in Berlin, Haefliger received his first violin and piano lessons at the age of six. He graduated in 1983 with a degree in violin performance from the Juilliard School in New York. He later continued his education in management

at the University of St. Gallen, earning an Executive MBA in 1999. From the beginning of his career, he has been active at major European music festivals. His early life as a concert violinist took him, among others, to festivals in Lucerne, Interlaken, and Spoleto. In 1985, he made his debut at the Lucerne Festival together with his brother Andreas, when it was still known as the International Music Weeks Lucerne. In 1986, he co-founded the "Young Artists in Concert" festival in Davos, which he directed until 1998. From 1996 to 1998, he also served as Artistic Director of Collegium Novum Zürich.

From 1999 to 2025, Michael Haefliger was Executive and Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival. Under his leadership, this developed into one of the world's leading forums for classical and contemporary music, shaped by annually changing thematic festivals, innovative formats, and pioneering artistic initiatives. Among the most significant milestones are the founding of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in 2003 together with Claudio Abbado, continued from 2016 under Riccardo Chailly, and the establishment of the Lucerne Festival Academy in 2004 with Pierre Boulez as artistic director. From 2016 he was succeeded by Wolfgang Rihm, after his death, Jörg Widmann was appointed to take up the role in 2026.

In 2013, with Lucerne Festival Ark Nova, Haefliger, together with Arata Isozaki and Anish Kapoor, initiated an internationally acclaimed project featuring performances in Matsushima, Sendai, Fukushima, Tokyo and Lucerne. New outreach formats such as "40min" (from 2014), the founding of the Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra (LFCO) in 2021, and Lucerne Festival Forward, also launched in 2021 and curated by the Contemporary Leaders, further expanded the festival's profile. Since 2005, international tours of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra under Claudio Abbado and Riccardo Chailly have taken place in cities including Rome, Tokyo, Vienna, Beijing, Shanghai, New York, Paris, and Madrid.

Since 2026, Michael Haefliger has been working as an independent consultant and founded Michael Haefliger Arts Consulting. As Artistic Advisor to the China Shanghai International Arts Festival, he supports one of the world's most diverse and dynamic cultural festivals in its strategic and artistic development.



In Japan, he serves as Artistic Advisor to the Kusatsu International Summer Music Academy & Festival. With the “Three Mountains Project,” which he developed and conceived, Haefliger contributes his own programmatic vision to the festival’s future direction: the locations Kusatsu, Takasaki, and Karuizawa are being reimagined as a clearly profiled cultural axis and strategically interconnected. The project is a central component of the strategic realignment leading up to the 50th anniversary in 2030.

Haefliger serves on the boards of various international organizations. In 2000, he was named a “Global Leader of Tomorrow” by the World Economic Forum. In 2003, he received the European Cultural Innovation Award, followed in 2007 by the Tourism Award of the Tourism Forum Lucerne. In 2014, he was honored with the Central Switzerland Culture Prize. He has also received the Medal of Honor of the City of Lucerne and the award of the Swiss Society of New York. In 2025, he was presented with the International Citation of Merit Award by the International Society for the Performing Arts for his longstanding and visionary contributions.

Michael Haefliger is a member of the board of trustees of the Davos Festival and the UBS Culture Foundation. From 2020 to 2025, he served on the board of trustees of the Swiss Youth Music Competition. From 2012 to 2018, he was also a member of the board of trustees of the World Arts Forum, and from 2008 to 2020 of Avenir Suisse. He is Chair of the Jury of the UBS Young Artist Award and has been a Board Member of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation since early 2024. Michael Haefliger is an alumnus of the Juilliard School of Music, the University of St. Gallen, and the Harvard Business School.