

ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA FESTIVAL

PRESS KIT

INTRODUCTION

The ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival is more than an international event of excellence: it is the ideal opportunity for those in quest of authenticity to experience the magic of music, amplified by a beautiful natural stage, far from the background noise that dominates our time.

In the heart of the National Park of the Tuscan Archipelago, musicians from all over the world meet every year since 1997 to share the re-creation of musical masterpieces of all times in an unparalleled context, inspired by an extraordinarily luxuriant and welcoming land, a magical place steeped in history, where the enchantment of the landscape naturally blends in with the art and a simple way of life, in harmony with nature.

HISTORY

Since its inception, the ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival has earned a prominent place among international music events. It has grown to become a musical laboratory in which renowned artists and young emerging talents entwine their experiences and sensibilities.

The mutual enhancement of the intangible virtue of the classical music with the material one offered by the uniqueness of the Elba territory (beating heart of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of the Tuscan Archipelago) are the basis of the Festival's identity.

The Festival was founded in 1997 by George Edelman together with Yuri Bashmet and the former Municipal Councilor for Culture of Portoferraio, Massimo Scelza, with several ambitious objectives: creating opportunities for new musical collaborations, offering the chance to prepare and perform challenging repertoire, and finally providing contemporary composers with the possibility to oversee premiers of their new works.

The City of Portoferraio – main venue of the Festival – has welcomed the event since its foundation and has been offering a fundamental support. The connection between the Festival and the city is enhanced by the decisive impulse given to the restoration and reopening of the historic Teatro dei Vigilanti in Portoferraio. Built by Napoleon during his exile on the Island of Elba, this theatre remained closed since 1952. After a long restoration, it was reopened with the very first concert of the Festival on October 4th 1997.

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With a goal to embrace the territory of the Island in its entirety, the Festival regularly involves 4 Municipalities: together with Portoferraio, also Marciana, Marciana Marina and Rio, and also Marina di Campo (with concerts in the small medieval village of Sant'Ilario and on the Island of Pianosa) and that of Capoliveri.

The fusion of music, nature and history is the founding idea that inspired us to develop "musical explorations", aimed not only at those who are already passionate music lovers, but also at anyone who is sensitive to nature and beauty. The public is invited to follow the concerts in different and spectacular places: the picturesque ruins of the Roman villas, the medieval fortresses, the trekking routes, the uncontaminated islands of the Tuscan Archipelago. Informal moments of meeting with the artists create unique sharing experiences.

The concert program offered during the Festival is always focused on artistic excellence and on variety, ranging from the Baroque / classical repertoire to the twentieth century music. Great attention is brought to the performances dedicated to the music of our time in presence of the composers.

The artistic proposal of the event includes Jazz concerts. After the successful stand alone event in Capoliveri (1999-2001), the Festival traditionally welcomes at least one jazz concert every year.

ARTISTS

Throughout the years many exceptional artists have contributed to the Festival. Among them Martha Argerich, Yuri Bashmet, Marisa Tanzini, Mario Brunello, Thomas Quasthoff, Natalia Gutman, Khatia Buniatishvili, Gidon Kremer, Eddie Gomez, Alexander Melnikov, Uto Ughi, Sayaka Shoji, Stefano Bollani, Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, Beatrice Rana, Martin Helmchen, Victor Tretiakov, Billy Cobham, Gordan Nikolić, Vadim Repin, Enrico Rava, Pascal Moragues, Jimmy Cobb, Enrico Pace, Beatrice Rana, Michel Portal, the orchestras I Solisti di Mosca, Kremerata Baltica, La Camerata Fontainebleau and the singers of the Mariinsky Theatre of St Petersburg.

The Festival has also offered residency to contemporary composers, among them Giya Kančeli, Carlo Boccadoro, Boris Tiščenko, Giovanni Sollima, Alexander Raskatov, presenting their works that were rehearsed and performed under the authors' guidance.

Between 2001 and 2005 the Festival benefited from hosting its symphony orchestra: the Elba Festival Orchestra, consisting of The Moscow Soloists' groupe of strings and the wind section featuring musicians from selected European orchestras.

LOCATIONS

The ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival was born with the ambition to fit harmoniously into the unique natural stage of the Island of Elba. It offers an immersive experience, in which music, history and nature blend together. Here, the concert becomes an opportunity for the audience to become part of the metaphysical experience.

Enclosed in a microcosm of 224 square kilometers, with its splendid nature, the Island of Elba is an incredible open-air laboratory for geologists, naturalists, botanists... but also for photographers, painters, musicians, poets and dreamers of all kinds.

Elba is the largest of the islands of the Tuscan Archipelago National Park, the largest marine park in the Mediterranean. It is included in the Tuscan Islands Biosphere Reserve of the UNESCO MaB (Man and the Biosphere) Program, created to promote a balanced relationship between man and the environment through the protection of biodiversity and the good practices of sustainable development.

The extraordinary environmental diversity of the Island goes together with its historical complexity: a crossroads of peoples since early times, its territory today offers tangible traces of a magnificent past, from the ruins of the Etruscan walls and Roman villas, to the medieval and seventeenth-century Pisan and Spanish fortifications, to the evidence of the Medici domination and the Napoleonic exile.

The Festival has always had its fulcrum in Portoferraio, the capital and main port of the island, whose Municipality has given its fundamental support since the first edition. Over the years, the Festival has grown to embrace the entire Elba territory, reaching out and involving all of its towns and bringing the concerts to the most evocative places on the island.

In recent years, the Festival has developed the idea of "musical explorations": concerts in particularly fascinating locations which become an informal encounter of the artists and their public. After the moving experience of a sunset concert on the Island of Pianosa, the Festival organizers intend to broaden the horizon by reaching to other islands of the Tuscan Archipelago.

ART DIRECTOR

George Edelman is the founder and Art Director of the ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival. Trained pianist, authoritative teacher, he has a long-standing experience as founder and director of internationally renowned music festivals.

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Born in the Soviet Union, he settled in New York in 1978, starting an intense activity in the United States as a sought after chamber music player and as a professor of piano and chamber music at the Mannes College of Music and The New York University (NYU) both in New York City.

In 1986 he was appointed Director of the New York University Summer School in Italy, where he taught the history of chamber music and conducted a seminar on German Lied for a large group of students from the NYU. To give more breath to the event, on that occasion he invited several illustrious fellow musicians to participate in a series of chamber music concerts together with the students: this improvised musical gathering was enormously successful and became, in fact, the first step towards the foundation of the Camerino International Chamber Music Festival, which started in 1987. After eight years of constant growth and excellent results, Edelman decided to leave the Artistic Direction of the Camerino Festival to face new challenges, aware of having created a well-rooted event.

In 1988, George Edelman returned to Europe, choosing Paris as his city and the basis of his activity as an organizer of musical events. In 1997, together with the famous violist Yuri Bashmet, he founded the ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival, contributing with this initiative to bring back to life and restore the fascinating Teatro dei Vigilanti, the historic theater of Portoferraio, built in 1814 by Napoleon Bonaparte. The theater, abandoned for almost fifty years, was reopened for the opening concert of the Festival in October 1997. Since then, every year, an exceptional group of artists, chamber orchestras and internationally renowned ensembles have come together to make music on this lovely island.

In 2004 George Edelman was appointed Artistic Director of Ferrara Musica by its founder and president Claudio Abbado: for ten years Edelman ensured the continuous presence of Abbado in Ferrara until the death of the Maestro in January 2014, regularly producing his concerts and opera performances with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra Mozart. Edelman directed Ferrara Musica until 2018. In 14 years he has significantly contributed to the growth of its audience through numerous initiatives, such as the establishment of innovative subscription formulas, the production of ancient and baroque music events valorizing the historical and architectural splendour of Ferrara and capitalizing on its unique musical past, the hybridization of the public thanks to the series of contemporary music concerts at the local Jazz-club, drawing new enthusiasts through trendy concerts on Sunday morning, as well as the organization of Ferrara Sintonie – poetry and music themed evenings. As part of his work in Ferrara, Edelman led the Gustav Mahler International Youth Academy, dedicated to the advanced training of young orchestra musicians.

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Tireless and passionate cultural operator, George Edelman currently focuses his creative energies on the ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival, in view of its 25th anniversary (2021).

ELBA FESTIVAL PRIZE

The ELBA ISOLA MUSICALE D'EUROPA Festival has always been very active in promoting young talents. The Elba Festival Prize, created in 2003, is awarded every year to a young musician, recommended by the Artistic Director after a careful work of talent scouting.

The aim of the award is to enhance and encourage the young (often very young) talented musicians who are taking their first steps in capturing the attention of the public, or who have already started a career abroad and are still unknown in Italy. The Elba Festival Prize is an important part of the activities of the Friends of the Festival Association: since 2004 the Association finances the Prize, and its President participates in the award ceremony.

Most of the Festival's 17 winners have later received other important international awards and have undertaken an intense concert activity, crowned by numerous successes: Miroslav Kultyshev, Russian pianist awarded our prize at the age of 18 in its first edition, subsequently won the prestigious Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow and Monte-Carlo Piano Masters; the Italian pianist Vanessa Benelli Mosell, encouraged by our Prize (she was 17), continued her studies in Moscow and London, then settled in Paris where she became a sophisticated and brilliant interpreter of contemporary music; Alexander Gavrylyuk, Ukrainian-born Australian pianist, awarded in 2005, won in the same year a Gold Medal at the Arthur Rubinstein International Competition in Tel Aviv; the Hungarian violinist Kristóf Baráti, who from a very young age has distinguished himself in some international competitions, after the Festival's recognition in 2006, won the first prize at the Paganini International Competition in Moscow, and his concert career exploded internationally; in 2007 the Elba Festival Prize introduced Alena Baeva, a winner of the Henryk Wieniawski Competition in Poznań and the Paganini International Competition in Moscow who was unknown to the Italian public; for the Ukrainian pianist Vadym Kholodenko the Elba Festival Prize was a key event, following which he won three international competitions including, in 2013, the prestigious Van Cliburn Competition in Fort Worth (USA); for the Belgian violinist Marc Bouchkov, the Prize, received at the age of 18, marked the start of a series of awards in several important international competitions, including the Henri Koch of Liège, the Queen Elisabeth of Brussels, the First Prize at the Montreal International Competition and, more recently, the silver medal at the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow.

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The Elba Festival Prize 2019 was awarded to an exceptional Greek violinist, Jonian Ilias Kadesha, an artist already in great demand in several European countries, but still unknown to the Italian public.

For the first time since 2003, due to the exceptional situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, it was decided to call off the highly anticipated Elba Festival Prize ceremony, but we are already actively scouting for the winner of the 2021 edition of the Festival.

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