

COMPOSER / CONDUCTOR

David Philip Hefti

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Despite his classically avant-garde musical language, Hefti's prime concern is expressiveness – addressing his listener with a candid eloquence. He loves powerful contrasts and does not refrain from writing intense cantilenas. His music is capable of cumulative processes of concentration, and can unleash a vehement drive.

Süddeutsche Zeitung

As both composer and conductor, David Philip Hefti is one of Switzerland's outstanding musical personalities. He has composed over 100 works, including orchestral music, vocal works and chamber music. In 2013, Hefti was awarded the Composer Prize of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, in 2015 the Hindemith Prize of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival and in 2023 the Composer Award of the International Classical Music Awards ICMA. He has also won the International Composition Competition of the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades, the George Enescu International Competition for Composition in Bucharest, and the Gustav Mahler International Competition for Composition in Vienna. His orchestral works have been performed by conductors such as Peter Eötvös, Roberto González-Monjas, Howard Griffiths, Giancarlo Guerrero, Cornelius Meister, Kent Nagano, Jonathan Nott, Andris Poga, Michael Sanderling, Mario Venzago, Ralf Weikert, Kazuki Yamada and David Zinman.

In the 2025/26 season, David Philip Hefti will be prominently featured with a series of world premieres. In October, he conducts a programme in Boston with musicians from the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the ECCE Ensemble – including a new work of his own. December brings the performance of his double concerto for trumpets, *Final(ment)e*, in Stuttgart with the Staatsorchester Stuttgart under the baton of Cornelius Meister.

Further premieres follow in spring 2026: A new duo for violin and cello will be premiered at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg by Hellen Weiss and Gabriel Schwabe, while the Zürcher Kammerorchester under Willi Zimmermann will present a new work for string orchestra at the Tonhalle Zürich. Another highlight is a song cycle based on poems by Dragica Rajcic, to be performed by Jonathan McGovern and Judit Polgar at the Festival LiedBasel.

Looking ahead to the following season, a newly composed, large-scale orchestral work will receive its world premiere with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich under the direction of Paavo Järvi.

In the 2023/24 season, Hefti was Composer in Residence at the Zermatt Music Festival, where the highpoint was the world première of his octet *Des Zaubers Spuren* (Traces of Magic), composed to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Scharoun Ensemble Berlin. Hefti also conducted the Zermatt Festival Orchestra and supervised the students of the Zermatt Music Festival Academy. *Des Zaubers Spuren* was subsequently given its German première before an enthusiastic audience at the Ensemble's jubilee concert in the Berlin Philharmonic Hall, of which the *Berliner Tagesspiegel* commented that *The royal crown belongs to David Philip Hefti*. February 2024 then saw the world première of his *Feu d'artifice* (Fireworks) for solo violin, which was the compulsory piece at the

Second International Violin Competition of the Guadagnini Foundation in Stuttgart. In May 2024, his 8th String Quartet, *Gesänge der Sehnsucht* (Songs of Yearning), was given its first performance by the Stradivari Quartet in Prague.

Hefti's music-theatre work *The Snow Queen*, based on the eponymous fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, was composed for the Zurich Tonhalle Society on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. The semi-staged world première of this musical tale took place in 2018, with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra under the baton of the composer himself. Its CD recording was honoured with the Supersonic Award in 2020. *In "The Snow Queen", the cold takes many audible forms. There are wine glasses filled with water – they sound as clear and transparent as frozen crystals. The serial techniques that always accompany the appearance of the icy queen also come across as frosty and cool – these are academic number games that freeze into lifeless formulae. In stark contrast to all this are the micro-intervals and overtones that unite to create iridescent natural harmonies conjuring up an unsophisticated, real warmth.* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung)

In May 2017, Hefti's first opera, *Anna's Mask*, was given its world première at the St. Gallen Theatre under the baton of Otto Tausk. David Philip Hefti's musical language, which is characterised by transparency, a chamber-music intensity, and a concentrated sense of dramaturgy, is also manifested in this, his first opera. *Luminous ecstasy – and this is the point of it – is no betrayal of Hefti's aesthetic stance, which otherwise tends to fragile, pointillist drops of sound solidifying into chordal structures.* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung)

Hefti's musical partners have included Benjamin Appl, Juliane Banse, Mojca Erdmann, Viviane Hagner, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Christian Poltéra, Lawrence Power, Hartmut Rohde, Baiba Skride, Jan Vogler and Antje Weithaas. As both conductor and composer, he has worked with top-class orchestras and ensembles such as the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Bavarian State Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of Bavarian Radio, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Berlin Baroque Soloists, the Scharoun Ensemble, the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, the Tokyo Sinfonietta, the Ensemble Modern, the Amaryllis Quartett and the Leipzig String Quartet. He has been invited to renowned music festivals including Wien Modern, Beijing Modern, Ultraschall Berlin, the Lucerne Festival, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades, the Dvorák Festival in Prague and the Suntory Festival in Tokyo.

Recent releases in David Philip Hefti's extensive discography include the opera *The Snow Queen* (NEOS) and the album *Light and Shade* (NEOS), which reflects his many years of close collaboration with the Amaryllis Quartet. With the CD *Shades of Love: Sounds of K-Drama*, Hefti made his conducting debut with Deutsche Grammophon. This album was produced under his direction together with artists such as James Galway, Daniel Hope, Philipp Jundt, Albrecht Mayer, Richard O'Neill and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, and reached number one in the Korean classical music charts.

David Philip Hefti was born in Switzerland in 1975 and studied composition, conducting, clarinet and chamber music at the music academies of Zurich and Karlsruhe, where his teachers included Cristóbal Halffter, Rudolf Kelterborn, Wolfgang Meyer, Wolfgang Rihm and Elmar Schmid.

As of September 2025.

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Selected interviews, portraits and articles can be found on [David Philip Hefti's profile on Linktree](#).