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Festival expands beyond the Swiss Alps to make Asian debut in Shenzhen

By Chen Nan | China Daily | Updated: 2025-08-11 10:43

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Pianist Bruce Liu. Cellist Mischa Maisky and pianist Bruce Liu will greet the inaugural Verbier Festival in Shenzhen. [Photo provided to chinadaily.com.cn]

One of the world's premier classical music events, The Verbier Festival, is embarking on a historic expansion beyond the Swiss Alps, making its Asian debut in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in late January 2026.

"The strategic move reflects Asia's remarkable ascent as a classical music destination. With its robust arts education systems, thriving consumer market, and growing artistic influence, the region is full of potential for growth," says Martin Engstroem, the Verbier Festival's founder and director. Agreeing with his statement is Wu Jiatong, co-founder and president of Wu Promotion, who developed the "Verbier Festival in Asia" concept with Engstroem.

The Verbier Festival was established in Switzerland in 1994, to create a "music camp" for young artists, featuring the participation of global musicians.



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The cooperation also marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Switzerland.

The inaugural 2026 Verbier Festival in Shenzhen will run for 10 days from Jan 30 to Feb 8, 2026, presenting over 25 concerts and events. It will feature an exciting lineup, including pianists Martha Argerich, Lang Lang, Bruce Liu, Alexander Malofeev, violinist Joshua Bell, and cellist Mischa Maisky.

The world-renowned Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra will beat as the heart of the festival as its orchestra-in-residence, with music director Gabor Takacs-Nagy, performing six concerts.

Reflecting on the festival's commitment to nurturing young talent, it will offer master classes, one-on-one mentoring, and interactive sessions with famous musicians to provide learning opportunities for emerging artists from Asia and beyond. In addition to musical performances, the festival will engage the wider community through public workshops, educational programs, and partnerships with local institutions to enrich Shenzhen's cultural landscape.

The Shenzhen Longgang International Art Centre, a new cultural landmark scheduled to open by late 2025, and the Shenzhen Concert Hall will be the festival's main venues for performances and events.

"Since our first visit in 2003, a whole generation of young Chinese musicians is educated and has performed at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland," says Engstroem.

"Now is the moment to bring the Verbier Festival to Asia. The great artists who have made Verbier what it is over the past 32 years come to Shenzhen to share their extraordinary performances and collaborations."

"At this moment, I am proud to embark alongside Martin Engstroem on another milestone: the Verbier Festival in Shenzhen, the first in Asia, with support from the Shenzhen government," says Wu.



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"This initiative will position the Verbier Festival as a new platform for Sino-Swiss cultural exchange and mutual appreciation between the two cultures," says Ding Zhongyuan, deputy director of the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism, and Sports.

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