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THE EXCLUSIVE NEWS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF GSTAAD

GSTAADLIFE

Issue 7 | 14 December 2018
CHF 3.50

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CULTURE = EDUCATION?

Marie-Noëlle Gudin knows the answer



THE SOUND OF EDUCATION

Marie-Noëlle Gudin, Director of Le Rosey Foundation and Le Rosey Concert Hall in Rolle, explains why cultural activities should be an integral part in a holistic philosophy of education.

Can you tell us what it was like growing up in Le Rosey?

I attended Le Rosey for 10 years and found it amazing. I particularly liked moving between our two campuses – Rolle and Gstaad. I loved the village life of Gstaad, the mountains and being able to ski every day. Students have classes in the mornings then go skiing in the afternoon, with the exception of Thursdays. It's hard work and tiring, but exhilarating.

What is it about Le Rosey that sets it apart from other schools?

Having two campuses is one aspect. Another is the students themselves, particularly their diversity and internationality. We have students from over 50 countries with different cultural backgrounds and languages. They have to learn about each other and how to live together. Le Rosey is quite a small school with some 400-420 students; this makes it a close community. The relationship between students and teachers is also very close because the teachers share the students' lives – the teachers are the ones who turn their lights out at night, who eat and ski with them and are always there to talk to. Le Rosey is exceptional because it offers so much to its students. You need to be a

bit hyperactive to come here because you have activities non-stop! The academic standard is high and it's getting better each year – acceptances from the prestigious universities are proof of this.

In my view, one of the strong points of Le Rosey is that students develop academic knowledge and skills, together with creativity and imagination. Imagination is a very important tool that is not given importance in many schools. With the development of new technologies and artificial intelligence in the future, young people will be called upon to do jobs that don't even exist today.

The campus has excellent sports facilities and sports play a big role in student life. This is complemented by the artistic and cultural activities offered by Le Rosey Concert Hall. Today students can choose to do almost any art they would like to: music, plastic arts, photography and so on. I have the impression that students who graduate from Le Rosey are comfortable in almost any situation in life. They develop a self-confidence that's quite rare – a quality that, I think, is a specific attribute of the school.

Does philanthropy have a role in school activities?

Yes, both philanthropy and ecology. We have students who are very committed to climate change and we are also involved with several charities chosen by the students. Our main project is a sister school in Mali that we've been developing since 2001. For the past three years, we have also been working with refugees in Greece, helping them develop a school there. In projects like these, the students are always being challenged and pushed to take initiative, to be imaginative and entrepreneurial.

What is the background of Le Rosey Foundation?

It was created in the 90s by a group of anciens (student alumni) to promote the excellence of education, mainly through scholarship programmes. In 2014, when I became its Director, it was time to give the foundation a new impetus; managing Le Rosey Concert Hall, which had just been built, was a perfect way to expand its status to promote culture alongside education.

How has the foundation evolved since you took over and where do you see it going?

The foundation's activities have been a good way to increase awareness of Le Rosey and its activities. Many of the alumni didn't even know there

was a foundation or the difference between the foundation and the Association Internationale des Anciens Roséens. One of my objectives has been to clarify the role of the foundation, which I see as having three pillars: the first is Le Rosey Concert Hall and this is the most developed, the second is our charities and the third is the scholarships. I would like to see the other pillars develop in the same way that the concert hall has.

My role is to chair the artistic committee that chooses the programmes. In addition, I supervise communications and marketing and manage the administration. I am also very involved in fundraising. Being a foundation we rely on partnerships, donations and funds so we find business partners and patrons who want to be present at our events. I'm also developing a new funding strategy to attract season partners.

In the future, I would like to see the foundation further the development of its educational projects abroad, while also linking the three pillars more comprehensively. I believe, like my father, that culture plays an important role in education. It is thanks to his vision that we have this concert hall today.

With respect to Le Rosey Concert Hall, is it a disadvantage being located outside the city?

No, on the contrary. There are many people who live on La Côte who are happy to come here to avoid the traffic of Geneva or Lausanne. When famous orchestras tour it's possible for them to give a concert in Geneva and a second, the next day, at Le Rosey Concert Hall.

So you have no difficulty attracting famous artists?

Not at all. For example, we've had the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the St Petersburg Orchestra. We are

fortunate to have a good contact, who lets us know when these orchestras will be on tour. An important attraction is the concert hall itself. Many of the musicians tell us it has one of the best acoustics in Switzerland. We also make musicians and artists feel very welcome; this is part of Le Rosey hospitality. Our concert hall is in its fifth season and we are becoming increasingly well-known. We now have about 150 season members that attend all the concerts. In the first two seasons we had to focus a lot on communication and publicity. People knew about Le Rosey but they had no idea we had a concert hall. Now there are people who know about the concert hall but not about the school!

Would you say that the concert hall is a way of getting the school known within a different circle?

Yes, but the main concern is always the students. It's a wonderful tool to promote culture amongst young people. We design the programme of concerts with the students in mind and try to make it interesting for them. We aim to increase their knowledge and appreciation of music. We also offer students of the schools around here the opportunity to come to the concerts for 10 francs a ticket.

We try to have 12 to 13 concerts each year, including one or two events during the winter months when the school is in Gstaad. The concerts are varied – classical, jazz, modern and sometimes theatre. For instance, this evening, we are putting on Les

Misérables with a cast from Paris. I think our patrons like the fact that they have such a diverse programme with one season ticket.

Because of the high fees, some people think that Le Rosey is kind of a club for the ultra-wealthy. Do you think that this is true?

No. I think that Le Rosey really represents something else. It does have relatively high fees so you need to be wealthy to put your children here. We have a lot of wealthy but we also have people for whom Le Rosey represents a sacrifice. It is also a fact that Le Rosey educates the future leaders. Hopefully, they will take back to their countries what they have learned here and develop it further there.

Do you see a symbiosis between the foundation and Le Rosey School?

I think it plays a role within the wider concept of education. Both the school and Le Rosey Foundation are devoted to education and we believe that education can and will change the world. In different aspects and in different ways I think that that, and a certain vision of education, is what unites us.

GUY GIRARDET

*Le Rosey has invited a group from Paris to perform L'Ecume des Jours by Boris Vianpar. 1 March 2019, Grande Salle, Château-d'Oex at 8.30pm
All are welcome!*



Courtesy of Le Rosey