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Baltic Sea Philharmonic: Young United Sound of the North

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic brings together leading orchestral musicians from the ten countries of the Baltic Sea region – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. Under the leadership of Founding Conductor and Music Director Kristjan Järvi, the ensemble performs wide-ranging repertoire from across the region, both classical masterpieces and special commissions from emerging composers, in celebration of the region's cultural diversity. It upholds the principle that music can unite people of all nationalities and backgrounds and change society for the better, especially in a region that has historically been divided. Its 2016 tours include 'Baltic Sea Landscapes' in April and 'Baltic Sea Discovery' in September, the latter with Gidon Kremer and members of Kremerata Baltica.

The orchestra was born out of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic (BYP), which was formed in 2008, when Festival Director Thomas Hummel brought together founding partners Nord Stream AG and Usedom Music Festival. Since then, BYP's reputation and ambitions have grown steadily and it has toured the famous concert halls and festivals of Europe, including White Nights Music Festival in St. Petersburg, Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm, Bonn Beethovenfest, Rheingau Music Festival and Usedom Music Festival, its original birthplace. Concert tours have taken BYP to Italy several times, including to Meraner Festwochen and MiTo Festival. In 2014 the orchestra made its debut at Berlin's prestigious Philharmonie and one year later it performed at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris for the first time. It has performed with some of the world's finest soloists, such as Julia Fischer, Valentina Lisitsa, Jonas Kaufmann, Angela Gheorgiu and Daniel Hope, and been heard around the world, thanks to radio recordings for NDR Germany and Deutschlandradio Kultur and broadcasts by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) as well as TV broadcasts on Mezzo and Classica.

Another highlight for the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic was its concert at the Summit of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 2012 on the invitation of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who praised BYP as 'a compelling example of using music as a powerful medium for cooperation and integration across borders.' The group has also won international acclaim for its performances (*Tagesspiegel* wrote: 'The joy in discovery of Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic knows no boundaries. One simply had to get carried away'), and its recent CD on French label Naïve, 'Baltic Sea Voyage', of which review website www.planethugill.com wrote: 'Throughout the orchestra plays with a fine combination of technical finesse and emotional depth.' In 2015 the orchestra was

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awarded the European Cultural Prize in recognition of the enormous impact it has made on the culture of the region.

Over time the educational aspect of BYP's work with 18–28-year-olds intensified, with the formation of 'BYP Academy' including its orchestra LAB, workshops, composer programmes and mini-masterclass–auditions. In 2013 Baltic Sea Music Education Foundation (BMEF) was created to develop these elements into a consolidated music educational system for the area and as an organisation to run both orchestras. The foundation has a rich network of musical contacts and coaches, and its Artistic Council includes Valery Gergiev, Marek Janowski, Mariss Jansons, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Kurt Masur, who has conducted the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic twice.

Baltic Sea Philharmonic will be launched in 2016 to increase the breadth and depth of the foundation's educational offering. It is formed from current BYP players and former members from across the region. The two orchestras share the same aspirations towards culture, society and the environment, but while BYP remains a high-level orchestra training musical and social skills in talented young performers and composers, Baltic Sea Philharmonic becomes the primary public-facing part of the foundation, coming together several times a year to tour specific projects across Europe, and eventually the world.

For its inaugural tour in April 2016, 'Baltic Sea Landscapes', Baltic Sea Philharmonic tours Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Russia. Repertoire reflects the organisation's championing of the environment – the sea, the nature and the landscapes – including Jean Sibelius's *Karelia Suite*, Arvo Pärt's *Swansong*, Stravinsky's *Firebird*, and Gediminas Gelgotas's *Mountains. Waters. (Freedom)*, as well as works by Prokofiev, whose 125th anniversary the orchestra will celebrate on 23 April with a concert in Moscow.

In September 2016 the ensemble is planned to tour the 'Baltic Sea Discovery' programme across Central Europe, and further. Repertoire takes the theme of the swan, with works by Pärt (*Swansong*) and Tchaikovsky (*Swan Lake*). Gidon Kremer and his Kremerata Baltica join Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic, with its players embedded in the orchestra for the whole tour, and Kremer performing Weinberg's Violin Concerto.

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