

Press Release



New era begins with Baltic Sea Philharmonic inaugural tour receiving rapturous response from sold-out audiences

- **Tour ends in special Moscow concert celebrating Prokofiev's 125th anniversary together with pianist Alexander Toradze**
- **Nearly 6,000 people attended six concerts in five countries**
- **'Baltic Sea Landscapes' programme championed the environment**
- **Joint patronage of Ministers of the Environment for Finland, Estonia and Russia**
- **Arvo Pärt attended Tallinn concert**
- **Baltic Sea Philharmonic September 2016 tour discovers theme of the swan together with world renowned violinist Gidon Kremer**

Berlin, 25 April 2016. The new Baltic Sea Philharmonic finished its inaugural 'Baltic Sea Landscapes' tour on a high in Moscow on 23 April, celebrating the 125th anniversary of Prokofiev's birth. The tour has been full of highlights, with the orchestra travelling 1,829 km to perform 6 concerts in 5 countries, to more than 6,000 audience members, being asked back for 24 encores, playing under the patronage of the Ministers of the Environment for Finland, Estonia and Russia, and raising funds for the environment in a special benefit concert in Helsinki.

A new era

The new orchestra, which made its first tour 15–23 April, is an important step for the Baltic Sea Music Education Foundation in its ambitions for society, culture and the environment. Baltic Sea Philharmonic was born out of the success of its Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic, which continues as a training orchestra, while Baltic Sea Philharmonic will work on specific projects and programmes throughout the year, across the region and internationally. As Kristjan Järvi explained in his speech at the Helsinki concert on 19 April, 'We were once a youth orchestra, but no more. We have opened this incredible musical force to everyone who wants to join the movement.'

Connecting people

On its first tour, the new Nordic orchestra brought together 80 players from across the entire Baltic Sea region, connecting different nationalities and cultures through the international language of music; and not just players, but audiences, too. Kristjan Järvi explained: 'Our purpose is to make a point of connection, a point of contact, not only with the audience, but between all of these people,

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from Norway to Russia – ten countries in this incredible region. An orchestra has a big purpose. It manifests itself on stage, and you see all these different people from different countries playing together. We create an example of unity. This is the microcosm of the harmony that can exist in a united Northern Europe of ten countries. We're strong, if we want to be.'

Protecting the environment

Another strong motivation for the new orchestra is to celebrate and protect the natural environment, and this tour clearly demonstrated this commitment. The repertoire centred on nature and wildlife, including Jean Sibelius's *Karelia Suite*, Stravinsky's *Firebird*, Gediminas Gelgotas's *Mountains. Waters. (Freedom)* and Arvo Pärt's *Swansong* (Pärt attended the concert in Tallinn on 18 April). The concert in Helsinki was a benefit to raise money for the John Nurminen Foundation's 'Clean Baltic Sea' projects. In recognition of this commitment, the orchestra received the joint patronage of the Ministers of the Environment for Finland, Estonia and Russia, with Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister of Agriculture and the Environment of Finland, and Marko Pomerants, Minister of the Environment of Estonia attending the Helsinki concert.

In his speech at this concert, Kimmo Tiilikainen stressed the importance of the project and praised the Baltic Sea Philharmonic for its vision: 'None of us can save the Baltic Sea alone. International cooperation is a key element in cleaning the sea. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the musicians. They have an important message tonight: the Baltic Sea can still be saved and we don't have a moment to lose. I wish the Baltic Sea Philharmonic the greatest success on its tour around the Baltic Sea.'

Musical excellence

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic continues to build on the musical standards of excellence set by the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic, and feedback from both audiences and critics has already been outstanding. Michael Mustillo of *Baltic Times* wrote of the Liepāja concert on 16 April: 'It was an impeccable performance that was both electrifying and enthralling, and one which saw Järvi bringing down the house... Much of the concert resonated with his philosophy of living for the moment – being present and conscious, with the charismatic youngest member of the Järvi conducting dynasty making an almost spiritual hypnotic connection with his audience... He and his devoted musicians without doubt gave a life-enhancing musical experience.'

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In all, the orchestra brought this 'life-enhancing musical experience' to six cities between 15 and 23 April, starting in Klaipeda, Lithuania; travelling to Liepāja, Latvia, to perform in the impressive new Great Amber Concert Hall; on to Tallinn in Estonia and Helsinki, Finland; concluding in St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Concert Hall, on the invitation of Valery Gergiev; and finishing off in Moscow on Prokofiev's birthday.

Alexander Toradze champions Prokofiev

A special feature of the tour was the collaboration with pianist Alexander Toradze in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Sergei Prokofiev. Toradze is one of the world's leading Prokofiev proponents, and shares a deep friendship with Kristjan Järvi and his family. He performed the composer's Third Piano Concerto during the tour, including on 23 April, Prokofiev's birthdate, in Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall. Toradze described the feeling of working with a young orchestra: 'The enthusiasm, willingness and attention you get from these young players puts you back to your own young years. It reminds you how exciting every note is, and should be. You put these things on the back burner because you don't have time to recall them all, but when you're with a young orchestra it's right there in front of you.'

Bringing music to life

Inspired by the energy and vision of Kristjan Järvi, the new orchestra is also fully committed to making the experience of classical music open and inclusive, making connections with audiences both new and old. The tour included a special new light show to complement the programme, and all the concerts ended up with carefully chosen encores, reflecting local folk culture, and had the audiences clapping and dancing along. The players gave 24 encores throughout the tour.

More to come in September 2016: 'Baltic Sea Discovery' tour

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic makes its second tour this September, in close collaboration with Gidon Kremer and his world-renowned orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, and under the baton of Kristjan Järvi. The ensembles will join together in three concerts of works by Tchaikovsky, Pärt and Weinberg, [giving concerts](#) in Gdansk, [Poland](#) (18 September), Copenhagen, [Denmark](#) (20 September) and Peenemünde, [Germany](#) (24 September). Gidon Kremer will perform Weinberg's rarely played Violin Concerto, and the joint orchestra will perform Pärt's *Swansong* and Kristjan Järvi's own concert arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*.

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Notes to editors:

About the Baltic Sea Philharmonic

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic is the sister orchestra of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic (BYP), which was founded in 2008 as a joint initiative of the Usedom Music Festival and Nord Stream AG, who have continued to support the orchestra ever since. BYP was awarded the European Culture Prize 2015 in recognition of its exceptional achievements in developing creativity and innovation, and influencing the young classical scene across the Baltic Sea region. Both ensembles bring together orchestra musicians from the ten countries of the Baltic Sea region and share the same ambitions towards culture, society and the environment, upholding 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. Baltic Sea Philharmonic was founded in 2015 as the more public-facing side of the Baltic Sea Music Education Foundation, coming together several times a year to tour specific projects across Europe, and beyond, while BYP remains a high-level orchestra that trains musical and social skills in talented young performers and composers. Both orchestras are run by the Baltic Sea Music Education Foundation e. V. based in Berlin, Germany. www.bmef.eu

About the Usedom Music Festival

The Usedom Music Festival initiated the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic (BYP) to give the rich cultural region of the Baltic Sea a united voice. As the sounding Podium of the Baltic Sea, the Festival has equally presented the musical life of all countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, providing a special country focus each year of one of the Baltic Sea countries. The Festival is fostering artistic cooperation and dialogue across borders. World renowned soloists, conductors and ensembles such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Kurt Masur, Kremerata Baltica, Esbjörn Svenson Trio, Kristjan, Paavo and Neeme Järvi or Esa-Pekka Salonen and many more present the music cultures of their countries. The programmes cover a wide range of classical music spiced up with jazz and popular music. The Peenemünde Concerts, frequently featuring the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and the NDR Symphony Orchestra, are among the highlights of the more than 40 events presented by the Festival each year. From 24 September to 14 October 2016, the musical and cultural life of Sweden will be this year's Festival focus. www.usedomer-musikfestival.de

About Nord Stream AG

Main sponsor of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic as well as co-initiator and lead sponsor of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic (BYP), Nord Stream AG is an international joint venture established for the planning, construction and subsequent operation of a natural gas pipeline to link Russia and the European Union through the Baltic Sea. Sponsorship of the two ensembles is part of Nord Stream's programme of cultural, scientific and environmental initiatives that benefit the Baltic Sea region. Nord Stream AG stands for sustainable development, environmental, economic and social responsibility in the energy sector. The idea of a Baltic youth orchestra struck a chord with Nord Stream immediately: like Nord Stream the BYP would be innovative, cross-cultural and only made possible through teamwork and close collaboration across frontiers. www.nord-stream.com

The 'Baltic Sea Landscapes' tour of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic in April 2016 through Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Russia is supported by **Goethe-Institut** and the **German Federal Foreign Office**.