

# Press Release



## **Baltic Sea Philharmonic celebrates ten years since first concert**

- **Decade of consistent progress has seen youth ensemble grow into award-winning, boundary-breaking orchestra under leadership of Kristjan Järvi**
- **Baltic Sea Philharmonic has performed almost 100 concerts in 47 cities in 14 countries**
- **700 young musicians from the ten Baltic Sea countries have played in the orchestra**
- **Collaborators have included world-class soloists, among them Gidon Kremer, Julia Fischer, Valentina Lisitsa, David Geringas and Angela Gheorghiu**
- **Ensemble recognised internationally as a beacon of unity in a historically divided region; honoured with European Cultural Prize**
- **Orchestra has pioneered new concert experiences, including immersive format with lighting, projection art and sound design, and performing from memory**

**Berlin, 30 May 2018.** In less than a week, on June 4<sup>th</sup>, ten years ago, the orchestra that was to become the Baltic Sea Philharmonic gave its first ever concert, in the Latvian capital Riga. Under the baton of their Estonian-born conductor **Kristjan Järvi**, the musicians of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic performed Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, a new commission – *Burning Fiery Furnace* by Niels Marthinsen, and Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Danish violinist Søren Elbæk, Latvian pianist Lauma Skride and Lithuanian cellist David Geringas. The ensemble would go on to repeat the programme some three months later in Peenemünde on the island of Usedom, at the Usedom Music Festival.

'The atmosphere at both concerts was exhilarating,' recalls **Thomas Hummel**, Director of the Usedom Music Festival and Executive Director of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic. 'Everyone involved had the feeling that something great was just beginning. The musicians of the orchestra, who came from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden, all embraced the idea that they weren't just making great music together but were also being great neighbours.'

The new orchestra was born out of an idea from the Usedom Music Festival and sponsor Nord Stream AG – the operator of the natural gas pipelines through the Baltic Sea – to unite young

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musicians from all ten Baltic Sea countries, and engender through music a spirit of cooperation and harmony between people from a historically divided region. Ten years on, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic has become **a movement for bringing people together**, connecting communities from Norway to Russia. The youth ensemble that gave two concerts in 2008 is now an award-winning orchestra that tours throughout Europe and beyond, performing around a dozen concerts a year in some of the most prestigious venues, from the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris to Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. Thousands of young players from the Baltic Sea region, most aged between 20 and 30, have auditioned to play in the orchestra, with nearly 700 so far earning the opportunity. Under the dynamic leadership of Kristjan Järvi, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic is rewriting orchestral conventions – pioneering new concert experiences through the use of technology and design, and performing symphonic scores from memory. With its commitment to education and the environment, and its dedication to empowering musicians and inspiring audiences, the orchestra is set to take its message of unity and international understanding ever further in the years to come.

## Highlights of the first ten years

Within just a few years of its launch, the young orchestra had established an international reputation. On the invitation of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the ensemble performed at the opening of the Council of Baltic Sea States summit in Stralsund, Germany, in 2012. A year later, the orchestra inaugurated the 'Baltic Focus' at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, one of the world's largest classical music festivals. The orchestra's successful international touring was paralleled by its burgeoning education programmes, ranging from the specialist coaching for its musicians to workshops for young conductors and composers, and concerts for schools. In 2013 the **Baltic Sea Music Education Foundation** was created to consolidate these activities and to develop a sustainable education strategy for the Baltic Sea region.

By 2014 the orchestra was selling out prestigious venues on tour, including the Berlin Philharmonie, and performing with world-class soloists such as Julia Fischer and Valentina Lisitsa. The ensemble's impact as a symbol of international cooperation was recognised in 2015 with the award of the **European Cultural Prize** from the European Foundation for Culture 'Pro Europe'. In 2016 the orchestra was renamed the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and toured with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica. In the same year, the orchestra's second album was released on Sony Classical – an orchestral version of Wagner's *The Ring*, arranged by Henk de Vlieger.

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The Baltic Sea Philharmonic made history in 2017 by becoming the first orchestra in the world to perform Stravinsky's *The Firebird* from memory, setting in motion a new plan to play certain symphonic works by heart on future tours. The experience of performing *The Firebird* from memory was a liberating and inspirational one for many of the orchestra's musicians, and Kristjan Järvi, who has always encouraged the players to be open and fearless in their music-making, says: 'Musicians came up to me afterwards saying, "We want to memorise everything. We only want to play from memory from now on." That is a brilliant attitude.' Also in 2017 the orchestra pioneered a thrilling immersive concert experience for its nature-inspired '**Waterworks**' tour, combining cutting-edge projection art with atmospheric sound and lighting design, in collaboration with Sunbeam Productions. By the start of 2018 the orchestra had performed for around 100,000 concert goers in 47 cities in 14 countries, and given nearly 100 concerts in ten years.

## **Soloists and collaborators**

Some 24 soloists have performed with the orchestra since its first concert in Riga in 2008. Among them are world-class artists such as Angela Gheorghiu, Jonas Kaufmann, Jan Vogler, Martin Fröst and Alexander Toradze, and leading young soloists including Hyeyoon Park, Jan Lisiecki and Mikhail Simonyan. Guest conductors have included Kristjan Järvi's father Neeme Järvi, and also **Kurt Masur**, who conducted the orchestra at the opening of the Usedom Music Festival in 2012 and again in 2013. Masur, who died in 2015 at the age of 88, played a vital role as peacemaker in Leipzig during protests against the East German regime in 1989, and later conducted the city's Gewandhausorchester in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the official celebration of German reunification in 1990. For Kristjan Järvi, Masur's role as a unifying voice in a divided Germany makes him an important personality in the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's history and identity: 'He is one of the biggest heroes and role models we've been fortunate to have participate in our project. One of our clear missions is to unify East and West through music and culture, and to have Kurt Masur involved was a big stamp of approval, an endorsement that what we are doing is right.'

## **Vision for the future**

In its tenth-anniversary year the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will continue its adventurous project to perform symphonic scores from memory and will, for the first time, tour outside Europe, when it takes its pioneering 'Waterworks' programme to the United Arab Emirates in November. The orchestra will give the world premiere in July of the Violin Concerto by Lithuanian composer

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Gediminas Gelgotas, with Swiss violinist David Nebel as soloist. The ensemble's commitment to contemporary music is underlined by its role as a co-commissioner of a major new work by Steve Reich, *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra*. The Baltic Sea Philharmonic is part of an illustrious group of commissioning orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the last of which will give the world premiere of Reich's work on 1 November 2018.

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic aims to continue building partnerships across the Nordic region, and to spread its message of cultural understanding throughout Europe and beyond. The orchestra's Executive Director Thomas Hummel says he sees tours of the future perhaps including extended stays in certain cities, in order to create even more of a connection with the local community: 'It would be great if we could base ourselves somewhere for a few days, and bring a special vibe to that place, and make the people there feel that they simply have to come and experience what we are doing. And if we can do that not just in European cities but in other parts of the world too, and thus carry the unifying spirit of the Baltic Sea far and wide, that would be wonderful.'

## **Baltic Sea Philharmonic – a revolution in music and culture**

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic, which celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2018, is a new paradigm for music making in the 21st century. Its concerts are a unique spectacle of sound, light, projection art and choreography; its passion for playing orchestral works from memory transforms the musical experience for both players and audiences; and its performances, under the electrifying baton of Music Director Kristjan Järvi, have a special passion and energy that's infectious. But even more than this, as a community of musicians from ten Nordic countries, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic transcends geographical and historical boundaries and has become a movement for bringing people together. Embodying all that is innovative and progressive about the Nordic region, this visionary ensemble is taking the traditional orchestral model further than ever before. 'It is a living breathing creature, with boundless energy and enthusiasm for the new – an adventure in itself,' says Kristjan Järvi.

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## Notes to editors:

### **'Nordic Pulse' and 'Waterworks' – July 2018**

Saturday, 7 July 2018, 8.00 pm, Bad Kissingen (Kissinger Sommer), Germany

Baltic Sea Philharmonic  
Kristjan Järvi  
David Nebel

Programme 'Nordic Pulse'

Kristjan Järvi: *Aurora*

Gediminas Gelgotas: Violin Concerto (world premiere)

Peter I. Tchaikovsky: *Sleeping Beauty* concert suite (arranged by Kristjan Järvi)

Monday, 9 July 2018, 11.00am, Bad Kissingen (Kissinger Sommer), Germany (school concert)

Monday, 9 July 2018, 8.00pm, Bad Kissingen (Kissinger Sommer), Germany

Baltic Sea Philharmonic  
Kristjan Järvi

Programme 'Waterworks'

Gene Pritsker/George Frideric Handel/Charles Coleman: *Water Music*

Philip Glass: *Aguas da Amazonia* (orchestrated by Charles Coleman)

### **'Nordic Pulse' – September 2018**

Monday, 17 September 2018, 8.30 pm, Merano (Merano Music Festival), Italy

Tuesday, 18 September 2018, 8.00 pm, Munich (Herkulesaal), Germany

Thursday, 20 September 2018, 7.30 pm, Halle/Saale (Händel Halle), Germany

Saturday, 22 September 2018, 8.00 pm, Peenemünde (Usedom Music Festival), Germany

Monday, 24 September 2018, 5.00pm, Gdansk (Polish Baltic Philharmonic), Poland (without soloist)

Baltic Sea Philharmonic  
Kristjan Järvi  
Mari Samuelsen

Wojciech Kilar: *Orawa*

Gediminas Gelgotas: *Mountains. Waters. (Freedom)*

Arvo Pärt: *Fratres* for violin, percussion and string orchestra

Kristjan Järvi: *Aurora* for violin and orchestra

Jean Sibelius: 'The Tempest' concert suite (arranged by Kristjan Järvi)

Imants Kalniņš: 'Rock' Symphony (Symphony No. 4), first movement

### **About the Baltic Sea Philharmonic**

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic is a unique Nordic orchestra that brings together musicians from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. In 2018 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic celebrates its tenth anniversary. The orchestra started life in 2008 as the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic, a joint initiative of the Usedom Music Festival and Nord Stream AG. It quickly established an international reputation, not just for its acclaimed performances under the baton of Kristjan Järvi, but also with its powerful message of unity and cooperation in a region that has historically been divided. In 2015 the orchestra was awarded the prestigious European Culture Prize for its achievements in developing creativity and innovation, and influencing the cultural scene across the Baltic Sea region. Newly renamed the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, in 2016 the orchestra collaborated with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica, and

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celebrated the release by Sony Classical of its recording of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, arranged by Henk de Vlieger. In 2017 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic made history by becoming the first orchestra to perform Stravinsky's *The Firebird* from memory. The orchestra continues its commitment to innovation and to the environment in 2018 with an immersive, water-themed concert show that features cutting-edge visual art, lighting and sound design. [www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu](http://www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu)