

Press Release



Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi seduce audiences in sweltering Germany and Austria with cool Nordic sounds

- **'Midnight Sun' tour featured acclaimed performances in Berlin, Hamburg and Ossiach, with orchestra playing to more than 4,400 concert-goers**
- **Musicians performed entire two-hour programme from memory, with new concert presentation concept**
- **Invigorating collaborations with Norwegian violinist Mari Samuelsen and Estonian singer-songwriters Mick and Angeelia Pedaja**

Berlin, 4 July 2019. The **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** and **Kristjan Järvi** brought the fresh sounds of contemporary Nordic music to a roasting hot Germany and Austria on their **'Midnight Sun'** tour from 26 June to 2 July. Joined by Norwegian violinist **Mari Samuelsen** and special guests **Mick and Angeelia Pedaja** – singer-songwriters from Estonia – the orchestra opened with a performance in **Berlin's** Philharmonie on 26 June, the city's hottest day of the year so far. The ensemble then showcased its cool Nordic soundscapes in an equally balmy **Ossiach**, in southern Austria, on 29 June, with a concert celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Carinthian Music Academy. The closing concert in **Hamburg** on 2 July, at a sold-out Elbphilharmonie, was doubly cool, with the heatwave in northern Europe having receded in the face of the orchestra's breezy Baltic sounds.

A special programme, uniquely presented

The music of 'Midnight Sun' captured the magical atmosphere of a Nordic midsummer, and was inspired by the phenomenon of 24-hour daylight in the summer months above the Arctic Circle. Six pieces, including **Rautavaara's** *Cantus Arcticus*, **Stravinsky's** *The Firebird*, and works by **Pēteris Vasks**, **Arvo Pärt**, **Kristjan Järvi** and **Max Richter**, made for a richly varied programme. The way the Baltic Sea Philharmonic presented this music was truly original: the pieces were interspersed with songs by Mick Pedaja, who was partnered by the full orchestra, ambient electronics, and his wife Angeelia on vocals; and the musicians performed the whole two-hour programme from memory, and with no breaks – just discreet transitions between pieces, sometimes improvised by the entire orchestra.

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Light and joy in Berlin

The Berlin premiere of 'Midnight Sun' mesmerised the audience in the Philharmonie from the very beginning, as violinists from the orchestra emerged from around the auditorium, sustaining a single unison tone on their instruments as they slowly converged on the stage. As Matthias Noether for the *Berlin Morgenpost* wrote, 'It is rare in such a symphony concert that nobody can tell what is happening in those first moments, and that's refreshing.' The sustained tone in fact morphed into the limpid string textures of Vasks's *Lonely Angel*, with featured soloist Mari Samuelsen sending her line soaring above the orchestra. Elias Pietsch for the *Tagespiegel Berlin* praised her 'crystalline' sound in the Vasks concerto, and a performance 'at the same time fragile and powerful'. The Norwegian violinist also starred in performances of Richters *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Pärt's *Fratres* and Kristjan Järvi's *Aurora*.

Colourful dynamic lighting enhanced the musical atmosphere, and in *Aurora* the illuminations echoed the dancing lights of the piece's inspiration, the aurora borealis. In the words of the *Berlin Morgenpost*, Järvi as conductor 'moved almost like a pop star at the centre of these coloured lights', while the *Tagespiegel Berlin* likened the maestro to 'a goblin, jumping across the stage and whipping up more and more energy from his protégés. Cue a wildly successful interpretation of Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, with the orchestra kindling a veritable musical storm.' The same review praised the musicians' joy of playing, saying that 'This joy probably has a lot to do with playing by heart: due to the absence of music stands there is movement on stage, the musicians interact with each other, they look at each other a lot – the interplay is so alive.'

Acclaimed finale in Hamburg

The orchestra's closing performance of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* drew standing ovations and spontaneous expressions of enthusiasm in Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. Joachim Mischke from the *Hamburger Abendblatt* was particularly impressed by the young musicians' interpretation: 'Keeping Stravinsky's high-octane score from crashing under its own weight is no easy feat for an orchestra, let alone one with all the notes in front of the players' noses. But by heart, like the rest of the almost two-hour, uninterrupted programme? As a kind of story ballet, in which groups of instruments or individuals wander across the stage, in which they dance in rhythm and the concertmaster takes off her pumps in the midst of all this excess energy? This is clearly a different league.' Stefan Pillhofer of *Bachtrack* praised the orchestra's high-quality playing and the



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musicians' enthusiasm for performing from memory: 'It seemed to him [Kristjan Järvi] that he was happy about the opportunity to work together with these musicians, who made the concept possible in the first place thanks to their high flexibility and playing quality. (...) Not all orchestras are so versatile.'

Behind the scenes, and next steps

Ahead of the 'Midnight Sun' tour the 63 musicians of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic met for six intensive rehearsal days in Vlotho. After a public dress rehearsal in the small East Westphalian town the orchestra launched into a week of touring that involved travelling 2,780km and performing to a total audience of more than 4,000 people. The Berlin leg of the tour included a special **Talent Day** during which the orchestra's principal musicians led auditions of around 30 young players, all of whom were seeking opportunities to join the Baltic Sea Philharmonic on future tours.

The orchestra's next tour, '**Divine Geometry**', is only a couple of months away. Once again, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi will be presenting an exciting new programme, this time juxtaposing Baroque masters with giants of American minimalism. US pianist **Simone Dinnerstein** will join the orchestra to perform a concerto by Philip Glass, and the German premiere of a major new work by Steve Reich is one of the highlights of a tour that will feature performances at the **Merano Music Festival** on 20 September and the **Usedom Music Festival** on 21 September.

Baltic Sea Philharmonic – a revolution in music and culture

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic is a new paradigm for music making in the 21st century. Its concerts are a unique spectacle of sound, light, projection art and technology; 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



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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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Note to editors:

Next Tour: 'Divine Geometry' - September 2019

Friday, 20 September 2019, 20.30, Merano (Merano Music Weeks), Italy
Saturday, 21 September 2019, 20.00, Peenemünde (Usedom Music Festival), Germany

Program 'Divine Geometry'

Baltic Sea Philharmonic
Kristjan Järvi
Simone Dinnerstein

Johann Sebastian Bach: Chaconne, arranged by Arman Tigranyan
Philip Glass: Piano Concerto No. 3
George Frideric Handel: Too Hot to Handel concerti grossi suite, arranged by Kristjan Järvi
Steve Reich: Music for Ensemble and Orchestra (German premiere, only at the Usedom Music Festival)

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. 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's achievements were honoured with the prestigious European Culture Prize by the European Culture Foundation 'Pro Europe'. Newly renamed the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, in 2016 the orchestra collaborated with Gidon Kremer and the Kremerata Baltica, and in 2017 became the first orchestra to perform Stravinsky's *The Firebird* from memory. The Baltic Sea Philharmonic celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2018 and also 100 years of independence for Finland, the Baltic States and Poland with 'Nordic Pulse', a programme of music by leading Nordic composers which the orchestra toured to Switzerland, Italy, Germany and Poland. The orchestra has continued its commitment to memorised performance in 2019 with a new programme, 'Midnight Sun', which it performed entirely from memory. www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu