

# Press Release

## **Baltic Sea Philharmonic wows audiences at sold-out Merano and Usedom Music Festival concerts with new ‘Divine Geometry’ programme**

- **Kristjan Järvi conducted orchestra in memorised performances of Bach, Handel, Philip Glass and Steve Reich**
- **Exciting debut collaboration with American pianist Simone Dinnerstein**
- **German premiere of Reich’s *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra* at Usedom Music Festival**
- **Italian premiere of Glass’s *Piano Concerto No. 3* in Merano**

**Berlin, 24 September 2019.** The **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** and **Kristjan Järvi** returned to the **Merano Music Festival** in Italy on 20 September and the **Usedom Music Festival** in Germany on 21 September with ‘**Divine Geometry**’, a revelatory and completely memorised programme of Baroque and minimalist music. Delighting in exploring the connections between, and the symmetries within these two musical styles, the orchestra was joined for the first time by American pianist **Simone Dinnerstein**, as soloist in **Philip Glass’s *Piano Concerto No. 3***. This work received its **Italian premiere** in the closing concert of the Merano Music Festival. On the opening night of the Usedom Music Festival in Peenemünde, the orchestra gave the **German premiere** of **Steve Reich’s *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra***, a 2018 work which the Baltic Sea Philharmonic co-commissioned with the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Both ‘Divine Geometry’ concerts were sell-outs, and attracted a total audience of 2,200. The Usedom Music Festival performance was recorded for broadcast on [Deutschlandfunk Kultur](#) on 27 September and will be made available to other affiliated radio stations via the European Broadcasting Union.

### **Patterns of perfection**

‘Divine Geometry’ juxtaposed two giants of the Baroque (Bach and Handel), with two titans of American minimalism (Glass and Reich), exploring the fascinating similarities and relationships between each composer’s rhythmic patterns and musical structures. As Kristjan Järvi explained: ‘The programme centres around two boys from the same neighbourhood in Germany and two boys from the same neighbourhood in New York. It’s the story of how two Baroque masters, Bach

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and Handel, are reincarnated in the 20th and 21st centuries as Steve Reich and Philip Glass.’ Alongside Glass’s Piano Concerto No. 3 and Reich’s *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra*, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic performed an orchestral transcription of **Bach’s Chaconne** from the Partita in D minor, BWV1004, and Kristjan Järvi’s imaginative reworking of Handel concerti grossi, ***Too Hot to Handel***. The orchestra did not simply explore these rich musical juxtapositions by presenting each piece one after another, however. With characteristic ambition and innovation, the orchestra performed the entire programme as an unbroken line of music, interweaving complete works and individual movements from the Glass concerto and *Too Hot to Handel* with improvised connecting transitions. Moreover, this was all done entirely from memory, as has become the trademark performance practice of the boundary-breaking Baltic Sea Philharmonic.

## **Acclaimed returns to Merano and Usedom**

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic’s sold-out performance in Merano was the orchestra’s third appearance in as many years at this prestigious music festival in the South Tyrol. The orchestra’s return to the Usedom Music Festival, where it has performed every year since its founding in 2008, was another triumphant sell-out concert, and featured special projection art that enhanced the ‘Divine Geometry’ theme. Writing of the Peenemünde performance in the *Ostsee-Zeitung*, Ekkehard Ochs said: ‘Järvi’s concept captivates with its uncompromising approach and music-making that literally delights all the senses. The Baltic Sea Philharmonic can do just anything, and so can Järvi. He is right: his orchestra is more than just an orchestra!’

## **Simone Dinnerstein: an inspirational partner**

Philip Glass composed his Piano Concerto No. 3 in 2017 especially for Simone Dinnerstein. Making her debut with the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, the American pianist brought a wealth of experience of performing the piece – she has already played it more than 35 times with a range of different orchestras and ensembles. The ‘Divine Geometry’ concerts were, however, the first time that she had performed the concerto with its three movements interspersed with other music. Speaking to NDR Kultur (Northern German Broadcasting) about this approach, she said: ‘Kristjan wants to create his own line of music, so we hear the music in a different way and experience the juxtaposition of different composers and how they relate to each other.’ A frequent collaborator with Kristjan Järvi, Dinnerstein said that this project was the high point of their work together. ‘The musicians of this orchestra are extremely interactive with each other and are great listeners. They

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are so inspiring. They want to work on the music and understand it completely.’ The Baltic Sea Philharmonic players, for their part, found Dinnerstein a charming and inspirational partner in Glass’s beguiling music.

## **Dedicated preparation**

In the run-up to the ‘Divine Geometry’ concerts, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic came together in the German spa town of **Bad Schussenried** for six days of intensive rehearsals. Although many of the players had previously performed from memory with the orchestra, some of the ensemble’s new members were experiencing playing by heart for the first time, and the ‘Divine Geometry’ programme – which stretched to a full 130 minutes of music for the Usedom concert – pushed the orchestra to a whole new level of memorised performance. Kristjan Järvi acknowledged: ‘This programme makes our first performance of *The Firebird* from memory [in 2017] and even this year’s memorised performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* seem like a walk in the park.’ The rehearsal period culminated in a **full public dress rehearsal** in Bad Schussenried, attended by around one hundred of the town’s music lovers.

## **Finale to 2019**

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi will bring their year to an end with the orchestra’s debut performance in Hungary on **19 November**. The concert at **Müpa Budapest** will feature music by Grieg and Stravinsky, including a memorised performance of the orchestra’s signature work, *The Firebird*.

## **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 concert: 'Midnight Sun' in Budapest, November 2019**

**Tuesday, 19 November 2019, 19.30, Budapest (Müpa Budapest), Hungary**

**Program 'Midnight Sun'**

**Baltic Sea Philharmonic**

**Kristjan Järvi**

*József Balog*

Edvard Grieg: *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1

Edvard Grieg: Piano Concerto

Igor Stravinsky: *The Firebird* (1945)

## **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 new programmes 'Midnight Sun' and 'Divine Geometry', both of which it performed entirely from memory. [www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu](http://www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu)