

# Press Release

## **Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi end 2020 with continuing innovation and resilience in the face of the pandemic**

- **Orchestra's exciting digital project 'Musical Chain', which launched in July 2020, to develop in 2021 with more strikingly original music videos and special collaborations**
- **Ensemble hopes to restart live performances in March 2021 with 'Midnight Sun' tour of Poland and Germany**
- **Romanian debut for Baltic Sea Philharmonic set for August 2021, with two concerts at Enescu Festival in Bucharest**

**Berlin 29 December 2020.** After a year of unprecedented breaks in live performance, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi head into 2021 with a distinctive digital presence that has taken on a new dimension in the face of pandemic challenges. The orchestra's innovative online 'Musical Chain' project, which launched in the summer of 2020, not only strengthened the bonds between the musicians of the orchestra, who were unable to travel and play together. It also set in motion a new creative outlet for the ensemble, with musicians and artistic collaborators coming together with professional production teams to produce strikingly original music videos that build on the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's reputation as a fearless and boundary-breaking ensemble. Although the orchestra was able to tour safely and successfully in September 2020, and is carefully planning its return to the stage in 2021, 'Musical Chain' has become an important part of the ensemble's identity, and will continue to develop and inspire in 2021.

### **2020 in review – innovation and success in the face of adversity**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic upended the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's touring schedule for much of 2020, the orchestra started the year in spectacular style with a charity concert at Hamburg's **Elbphilharmonie** with the pop band **Bastille**. The orchestra and the British indie group joined forces to headline the event on 4 January for Channel Aid, which livestreamed the performance on its YouTube charity channel. The hugely well-received concert – the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's first collaboration with a major pop band – was a sell-out, with 2,100 music fans packing the Elbphilharmonie, and more than 10,000 following the livestream on YouTube.



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When the pandemic forced the cancellation of a special performance of **Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7** to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic musicians instead came together virtually to record a 20-minute excerpt from the symphony's first movement. A total of 108 musicians made their own recordings at home, and these recordings were then brought together to create a virtual orchestra performance, which premiered online on 8 May.

With their next digital initiative, '**Musical Chain**', Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic took the virtual orchestra concept in a completely fresh direction, bringing musicians from the orchestra together with other artists and creative collaborators. 'Musical Chain', which launched in July 2020 and will continue in 2021 with further collaborations and special guest artists, showcases how the Baltic Sea Philharmonic is evolving to become more and more like a band, with Järvi as much producer as conductor. The project has so far featured four strikingly original music remix videos that reimagine iconic classical pieces: '[Midnight Mood](#)', based on Grieg's 'Morning Mood' from Peer Gynt; '[Beethoven's Twilight](#)', inspired by Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; '[Ascending Swans](#)', based on Sibelius's 'Song of Praise' from the Swanwhite Suite; and '[Nutty Christmas](#)', a fun seasonal take on Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker. For each video, Baltic Sea Philharmonic musicians recorded audio tracks at home and filmed themselves outside in atmospheric landscapes. Kristjan Järvi then mixed the audio and a professional video production team edited the final videos, which were released on the orchestra's social media channels. 'Musical Chain' also received wide media coverage: [Northern German Broadcasting \(NDR\)](#) and international blogs reported on the innovative project, and the three-country television station 3SAT broadcast 'Nutty Christmas' as a Christmas greeting to all its viewers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland on the release day of 11 December.

In September 2020 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic was able to return to the stage with a shortened '**Nordic Pulse**' tour of Italy and Germany. Touring as a smaller ensemble of 39 musicians, the orchestra gave sell-out concerts at the **Merano Music Festival** and the **Usedom Music Festival**, performing to a total of 1,300 concert-goers. The programme took audiences on a thrilling musical voyage through the Baltic Sea region, with composers from all around the region represented, including Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Stenhammar, Nielsen,



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Gediminas Gelgotas and Kristjan Järvi. The players performed the entire 70-minute-plus programme from memory, with members of the ensemble taking the soloist roles in several pieces.

Away from the stage, **Sony Classical** released two recordings by the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi in 2020. The first of these, which came out in May, and which features the orchestra and Swiss violinist David Nebel in **Stravinsky's Violin Concerto**, has been nominated for the 2021 ICMA Classical Music Awards in the concertos category. The second recording, released in November, was ***Sleeping Beauty***, Kristjan Järvi's innovative arrangement of Tchaikovsky's famous ballet as a dramatic symphony. This album was enthusiastically acclaimed by the media in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A reviewer from the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter wrote: 'It is a joy to hear Kristjan Järvi's and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's distillation of Tchaikovsky's ballet *Sleeping Beauty*.' And the West German General Newspaper enthused: 'He calls his *Sleeping Beauty* a "dramatic symphony" and indeed the result is gripping, intoxicating, dazzlingly beautiful. With his highly motivated Baltic Sea Philharmonic, Järvi gives the orchestra the role of a narrator.' The Baltic Sea Philharmonic and David Nebel also feature on Kristjan Järvi's album ***Nordic Escapes***, which was released on BMG's Modern Recordings in August, with Järvi conducting the violinist and orchestra in his dynamic and uplifting piece *Aurora*.

## Looking ahead to 2021

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi are hoping to return to the stage in March 2021 with a '**Midnight Sun**' tour of Poland and Germany. While constantly monitoring the COVID-19 situation and consulting regularly with concert presenters, the orchestra continues to plan for 'Midnight Sun' concerts in **Szczecin** on 12 March, **Hamburg** on 14 March and **Berlin** in 15 March. The characteristically eclectic programme includes music by Grieg, Tchaikovsky and Robert Koch, plus new music and arrangements by Kristjan Järvi. Subject to the progress of the pandemic and the impact of related restrictions, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will make its Romanian debut later in 2021, with concerts on 30 and 31 August at the **Enescu Festival** in Bucharest. There it will collaborate with pianist Maria João Pires and violinist Viktoria Mullova in two contrasting programmes, one featuring music by Mozart and Enescu, and the other



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including works by Arvo Pärt and Tchaikovsky. Also on the orchestra's calendar for 2021 is a performance at the Usedom Music Festival in September, as part of a **'Nordic Swans'** tour that features music by Arvo Pärt, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius.

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

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic takes the orchestral concert experience to a new dimension. Every performance is a voyage of musical discovery, as the musicians perform the entire programme from memory, creating a one-of-a-kind artistic journey. Each concert is a unique spectacle of sound, light, visual art, technology, choreography and playing by heart, and under the electrifying baton of Music Director and Founding Conductor Kristjan Järvi every performance has a special energy that is absolutely infectious. But even more than this, as a community of musicians from ten Nordic countries, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic transcends 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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### **'Musical Chain' videos in the 'Rewritten Series' on YouTube:**

['Nutty Christmas'](#)

['Ascending Swans'](#)

['Beethoven's Twilight'](#)

['Midnight Mood'](#)

### **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 since then has toured innovative programmes that throw classical music conventions out of the window and enable audiences and the musicians alike to experience new musical dimensions. After becoming the first orchestra in the world to perform Stravinsky's *The Firebird* from memory, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic is now widely known for its commitment to playing entire programmes by heart. The orchestra and Kristjan Järvi started 2020 with an exciting collaboration, performing with British indie band Bastille at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. In



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July the orchestra and Kristjan Järvi launched 'Musical Chain', a new online format with a unique series of remix videos, featuring musical gems recut for the 21st century. In September, after an unprecedented break because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic returned to live performance, touring Italy and Germany with a new 'Nordic Pulse' programme. Sony Classical released two albums by the orchestra in 2020: in May, a recording of Stravinsky's Violin Concerto featuring David Nebel; and in November, Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, newly arranged by Kristjan Järvi as a dramatic symphony. [www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu](http://www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu)