

Press Release

Baltic Sea Philharmonic celebrates return to European touring with exhilarating ‘Nordic Swans’ tour of Italy, Slovenia, Germany and Poland

- **First major tour with Kristjan Järvi since September 2020 featured concerts in Merano, Verona, Ljubljana, Peenemünde and Szczecin**
- **Orchestra travelled 3,660 km between 3 and 12 September, performing to 3,000 concert-goers**
- **Swan-themed programme of music by Arvo Pärt, Sibelius and Tchaikovsky performed entirely from memory**
- **Concerts featured special lighting and sound design, plus video projections and bespoke concert outfits**
- **‘Nordic Swans’ to return in March 2022 with performances in Antwerp and Berlin**

Berlin, 14 September 2021. The **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** completed a successful return to European touring on 12 September at the Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic in Szczecin, Poland. The performance with Founding Conductor and Music Director **Kristjan Järvi** was the culmination of the orchestra’s **‘Nordic Swans’** tour, its first major European tour after 12 months of unprecedented interruptions to live performance because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Between 3 and 12 September, 45 musicians of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic travelled 3,660 km, beginning in Italy before journeying to Slovenia, Germany and Poland. A total of around 3,000 concert-goers – with audience numbers limited by Covid restrictions – experienced the orchestra’s unique style and energy at performances in **Merano, Verona, Ljubljana, Peenemünde and Szczecin**. The musicians played a new swan-themed programme of music by **Arvo Pärt, Sibelius** and **Tchaikovsky** entirely from memory. Together with dramatic lighting and sound design, bespoke concert outfits and video projections combined to turn the audience experience into a truly immersive spectacle.

‘Nordic Swans’ – a unique Baltic adventure

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic’s September 2021 tour celebrated the swan, a cherished bird of Nordic culture. The orchestra opened its programme with Arvo Pärt’s hymn-like **Swansong**, continued with Sibelius’s evocative **The Swan of Tuonela**, and brought audiences to their feet with Tchaikovsky’s **Swan Lake**, which Kristjan Järvi had arranged as a dramatic symphony. In signature Baltic Sea Philharmonic style, the musicians played the entire programme, plus two encores – the ‘Song of Praise’ from Sibelius’s *Swanwhite* Suite and *Midnight Sun* by Kristjan Järvi – by heart. And the orchestra showed itself truly as an ensemble of soloists, with starring roles for

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cor anglais player Victor Sjögren in *The Swan of Tuonela*, and in *Swan Lake* for violinists Kseniia Ivakina, Ilze Gagaine, Malwina Kulisiewicz, Laura Zimka and Evgenia Pavlova, and trumpeter Josep Gómez Alemany, among others. The orchestra's performances combined exhilarating music making with atmospheric lighting and elegantly crafted sound effects. Special video projections enhanced the swan theme, and bespoke black-and-white concert outfits evoked the impression of swans moving on dark water.

Flying high across Europe

The 'Nordic Swans' tour was immediately preceded by rehearsals for the musicians in Bucharest, Romania, where the orchestra and Kristjan Järvi had given two acclaimed concerts on 30 and 31 August at the prestigious Enescu Festival. The orchestra travelled first to **Merano** in Italy, for its fifth appearance in as many years at the Merano Music Festival. The sold-out concert at the town's Kursaal on 3 September was recorded by Italia Festival and the video is now available on demand from its [website](#). Writing about the performance for *Il Manifesto*, Elfi Reiter was struck by the visual impact of the musicians' outfits, and the pure energy of the playing: 'The orchestra, in black and white tailored suits with little wings on their sleeves, create the kind of luminous atmosphere that moves body and soul, especially so in the case of Kristjan Järvi, who sometimes even jumps on the podium, the notes he conducts vibrating through the muscles of his body, just as they do in the musicians playing them.'

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic also sold out its next concert, at the Teatro Filarmonico in **Verona** on 4 September. The orchestra had last performed at the Teatro Filarmonico in 2015, and this 'Nordic Swans' performance was the first concert to take place at the opera house since its closure due to the pandemic. Audience member Stefano Provero thanked the orchestra on Facebook for its return to Verona and for its inspirational reawakening of the Teatro Filarmonico: 'Grazie! Thank you for coming! It's still not that great having half audience, all in masks, etc. But after two years finally it's time to see the light. And you, with your energy and joy in making music, brought light and a new hope. Bravi!'

Next up for the Baltic Sea Philharmonic was a debut performance in Slovenia on 6 September. The orchestra's open-air concert in **Ljubljana's** Congress Square, a historic square in the city centre with beautiful views of Ljubljana Castle, was livestreamed on the Ljubljana Festival website.



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For the German leg of the 'Nordic Swans' tour, the orchestra returned to its spiritual home, the Baltic Sea island of Usedom, for a sold-out concert in **Peenemünde** on 10 September. This performance was a special concert of the Usedom Music Festival, where the orchestra has played every year since its founding in 2008, and marked the 30th anniversary of Peenemünde's Historical Technical Museum. Reviewing the concert for the *Ostsee-Zeitung*, Cornelia Meerkatz wrote of the orchestra's *Swan Lake* performance: 'In Kristjan Järvi's condensed, dramatic-symphony arrangement of Tchaikovsky's enormous score, the ballet numbers emerged as fireworks. The orchestra sprang from dance to dance, from waltz to polka to pas de deux, one eruption following another, creating a tumultuous sensation. That the musicians played this enormously difficult score completely by heart, while standing, dancing and smiling, and in constant interaction with each other, bordered on the miraculous – a new freedom, music-making from another universe.'

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic closed a memorable and inspiring 'Nordic Swans' tour on 12 September with another debut, this time at the strikingly designed Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic concert hall in **Szczecin**. 'Nordic Swans' will take flight again in 2022, with concerts at the Queen Elisabeth Hall, Antwerp, on 23 March and the Berlin Philharmonie on 24 March. Tickets for these performances will go on sale later this autumn.

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 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:

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's growing discography with Kristjan Järvi includes three acclaimed recordings for Sony Classical, the most recent of which was Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, newly arranged by Järvi as a dramatic symphony, and released in November 2020. In 2021 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will continue its innovative digital project 'Musical Chain', launched in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unique series of classical remix videos brings musicians from the orchestra together with international artists and creative collaborators. The orchestra returned to live performance in summer 2021 with a Romanian debut at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest in August and a tour of Italy, Slovenia, Germany and Poland in September.
www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu