



Press Release

Baltic Sea Philharmonic musicians concluded historic residency of the New York Philharmonic at the Usedom Music Festival with two acclaimed chamber music concerts

- **Special ‘Side by Side’ collaboration of musicians from the Baltic Sea region with US-Americans during the New York Philharmonic’s exclusive European residency**
- **Twelve Baltic Sea Philharmonic musicians joined US orchestra and conductor Jaap van Zweden to perform Shostakovich Symphony No. 9**
- **Two chamber music concerts featuring players from both orchestras with works by Barber, Mozart and Brahms**

Berlin 25 May 2022. With two chamber music concerts in Wolgast and in the Baltic Sea resort Heringsdorf, musicians of the **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** and the **New York Philharmonic** ended the exclusive European residency of the US orchestra at the **Usedom Music Festival**. The world-renowned US orchestra and its music director Jaap van Zweden gave three concerts in Peenemünde on the Baltic Sea island of Usedom from 20–22 May. The opening concert of the residency featured twelve players from the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, who performed ‘Side by Side’ with the New York Philharmonic in Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 9. Musicians from both orchestras – five from the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and six from the New York Philharmonic – also came together for two chamber music concerts on 23 and 24 May performing Barber’s *Summer Music* and Brahms’s String Sextet No. 2.

A unique collaboration in a perfect setting

The programme for these chamber music concerts was devised by the New York Philharmonic and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic in collaboration. The playful, dreamy *Summer Music* by American composer Samuel Barber, in which the instruments intertwined imaginatively in many voices, was followed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s humorous Horn Quintet in E-flat Major KV 407. In the second part of the atmospheric concerts, the audience heard the second String Sextet by German composer Johannes Brahms, which holds a cryptogram as a reminder of Brahms’s childhood love.

For the musicians of both orchestras, the collaboration was an enriching and gratifying experience. **Richard Deane**, principal horn player of the New York Philharmonic, said: ‘The whole Usedom Music Festival was great fun. And there were great synergies between the musicians. The musicians of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic wanted to learn, and we also learned



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a lot and got to know different styles. We became friends and had a great time.’ **Alexey Mikhaylenko**, clarinettist and senior musician of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, was surprised by the way of playing and the convincing technical quality of the New York Philharmonic: ‘Sitting and playing inside of the NYPhil is comparable to sitting in a space craft – a perfectly organised machine, which goes forward without any delays and with visual lightness of performing.’ For **Viktoria Kassel**, an oboist with the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, unforgettable memories are linked to the collaboration: ‘I learned so much and met so many wonderful new people and musicians, I would never want to miss this experience. I am impressed by how perfectly yet realistically the musicians of the New Yorker Philharmonic make music. It’s not about the individuals, it’s about the whole, about the music and about offering the audience a special kind of concert experience. It reminds me a lot of our own orchestra, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic – maybe that’s why the collaboration worked so well straight away.’

Playing ‘Side by Side’ with the New York Philharmonic marked the Baltic Sea Philharmonic’s first performance collaboration with such an illustrious world-class orchestra. The Usedom Music Festival has been the natural host for this coming together, as the Baltic Sea Philharmonic was founded at the festival in 2008 and considers Usedom its birthplace and its home beside the Baltic Sea. Usedom also connects the two orchestras, through the late maestro Kurt Masur. The great German conductor became the first patron of the Usedom Music Festival during his tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic, and one of his last concerts was with the Baltic Sea Philharmonic in Peenemünde at the 2013 Usedom Music Festival. The Baltic Sea Philharmonic and the New York Philharmonic were among a group of six international orchestras that co-commissioned Steve Reich’s 2018 *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra*; the Baltic Sea Philharmonic gave the German premiere of the piece in September 2019 at the Usedom Music Festival, and the New York Philharmonic gave the New York premiere in December 2019.

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



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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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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 on the joint initiative of the Usedom Music Festival. 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'. In 2016 the orchestra was renamed the Baltic Sea Philharmonic. Since then it 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 addition, Max Richter's album *EXILES*, recorded by the Baltic Sea Philharmonic and Kristjan Järvi, was released in August 2021 on Deutsche Grammophon. In 2022 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will continue its innovative digital project 'Musical Chain', which it launched in 2020 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. In 2022 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will once again be able to travel thousands of kilometres around Europe, beginning in March with a tour of 'Nordic Swans' to Belgium, Germany and Poland. In July and August the orchestra and Kristjan Järvi will perform special concerts at the Pärnu Music Festival and the Birgitta Festival in Estonia. In the second half of 2022 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic will once again bring the magical power of fairy tales to life. Kristjan Järvi's own reworkings of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* showcases the quintessential colour and drama of the great Russian composer's theatre music. The programme including the *Nutcracker* among others will be performed at the Usedom Music Festival and in Tallinn in September as well as on a tour of Switzerland in December. www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu