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Baltic Sea Philharmonic wows audiences and critics in Hamburg and Switzerland with unique ‘Nutcracker Reimagined’ concert experience

- **Standing ovations greeted performances of new programme featuring Kristjan Järvi’s reworking of Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* ballet**
- **Orchestra played 80-minute programme entirely by heart for 5,400 concert-goers in Hamburg, Zurich, Geneva and Bern**
- **Debut collaboration with soloist Olga Scheps in Grieg’s Piano Concerto**
- **Concert experience included dynamic lighting design and choreography, plus bespoke outfits for musicians**

Berlin 15 December 2022. The **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** awed concert-goers at sold-out halls on its ‘**Nutcracker Reimagined**’ tour of Germany and Switzerland from 11 to 14 December. Performing four concerts in as many days, the orchestra and conductor **Kristjan Järvi** returned to the **Elbphilharmonie** in **Hamburg** before touring Switzerland with performances in **Zurich, Geneva** and **Bern**. Some 2,100 concert-goers packed a sold-out Elbphilharmonie for the orchestra’s fourth performance to date at this iconic waterfront venue. Another thousand welcomed the Baltic Sea Philharmonic back to the Tonhalle in Zurich for its first visit since 2015, and the orchestra’s debuts at Geneva’s Victoria Hall and the Casino Bern drew audiences of 1,500 and 800 respectively. Standing ovations honoured the musicians’ entirely memorised performances of a new programme that featured Kristjan Järvi’s imaginative reworking of **Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*** as a Dramatic Symphony, a recording of which was just released by Sony Classical on 2 December as the orchestra’s latest album. Another concert highlight was **Grieg’s Piano Concerto** with soloist **Olga Scheps** making her debut with the orchestra.

Sonic thrills, kinetic choreography and visual flair

With ‘**Nutcracker Reimagined**’, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic continued its signature reinvention of the concert experience, and the orchestra’s striking presentation and thrillingly energetic performance once again proved a huge hit with audiences. The musical programme, played without breaks or intermission, seamlessly interlaced movements from *Nutcracker* with movements from the Grieg Piano Concerto, as well as Järvi’s own *Ascending Swans*, **Arvo Pärt’s *Swansong*** and **Elgar’s ‘Nimrod’** from the *Enigma Variations*. The 66 musicians of the orchestra played the complete 80-minute programme by heart. With no scores or music



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stands the players were free to move around and across the stage and embrace a truly kinetic performance style. After collaborating for the first time with a choreographer during rehearsals in Hamburg, the orchestra wowed audiences with imaginatively choreographed elements including play-fighting, balletic turning on the spot, dramatic entrances and exits, and soloists from the ensemble coming forward to perform at the front of the stage. Atmospheric lighting design and bespoke concert outfits inspired by the soldier uniforms of traditional wooden nutcrackers enhanced the visual flair of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic's performances.

A rapturous return to the Elbphilharmonie, and memorable Swiss debuts

Every one of the orchestra's concerts at the Elbphilharmonie has been special and the 'Nutcracker Reimagined' performance was no exception. The Hamburg audience was both thrilled and moved, and gave the musicians a thunderous ovation. One concert-goer wrote on social media: 'The Elbphilharmonie and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic are a perfect match. It is very inspiring to watch and listen to musicians who are having so much fun creating such a cohesive experience for the audience – from the musicians' entry into the concert hall until the exit of the last percussionist.' Another audience member wrote of the performance: 'It was absolutely marvellous, pure magic, and I'm deeply grateful for the experience.' Reviewing the concert for the *Hamburger Abendblatt*, Marcus Stäbler wrote: 'Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic exude a huge desire for music and contact with the audience. They celebrated with a rhythm party at the end, receiving perhaps the fastest standing ovation in the history of the Elbphilharmonie.' He added: 'The musicians used the freedom of performing without scores to make music spontaneously, as when they sharply increased the dance tempo in the *Nutcracker's* Russian Dance, but also when they delighted in the melodies of Grieg's Piano Concerto and reacted sensitively to the nuances of the soloist.'

The Baltic Sea Philharmonic received standing ovations too from the audience in Zurich's Tonhalle. And the enthusiastic reaction of Swiss concert-goers made for truly memorable debuts for the orchestra at Geneva's beautiful Victoria Hall and the handsome Great Hall of the Casino Bern. Reviewing the Zurich performance for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Christian Wildhagen praised Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic for consistently finding new ways to make the orchestral concert an even more attractive experience: 'In zeitgeist jargon this is called "picking up the audience" – but Kristjan Järvi takes it seriously in a way that is as



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radical as it is entertaining.’ He summed up: ‘The suggestiveness of this musical happening certainly meets with open ears and alert senses in the audience – at the end there are ovations for an almost perfectly choreographed collective work of art.’

Coming up in 2023

After three European tours in 2022 and a series of summer festival concerts in Estonia, the Baltic Sea Philharmonic is now looking ahead to next year. Among other highlights, the orchestra will return to the Elbphilharmonie and Berlin Philharmonie in June 2023 and the Usedom Music Festival in September 2023 with a programme centred around Stravinsky’s *Firebird*, and in November 2023 ‘Nutcracker Reimagined’ will be back, this time on a tour of Germany and Belgium. NDR Kultur will broadcast a recording of the latest Hamburg concert on 23 January 2023.

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’s 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 initiative of the Usedom Music Festival. It quickly established an international reputation, not just for its acclaimed performances under the



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baton of Kristjan Järvi, but also with its powerful message of unity and cooperation in a historically divided region. 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 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 four acclaimed recordings for Sony Classical, the most recent of which is Järvi's own arrangement of Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*. Recorded by the orchestra completely from memory, *Nutcracker. A Dramatic Symphony* was released in December 2022. 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 continued its innovative digital project 'Musical Chain', which it launched in 2020 in the face 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 was once again able to travel thousands of kilometres around Europe in 2022, beginning in March with its 'Nordic Swans' tour of Belgium, Germany and Poland. In July and August the orchestra and Kristjan Järvi performed special concerts at the Pärnu Music Festival and the Birgitta Festival in Estonia. Through the second half of 2022 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic brought the magical power of fairy tales to life, with Kristjan Järvi's *Nutcracker* reworking showcasing the quintessential colour and drama of the great Russian composer's theatre music. New programmes including the *Nutcracker* were performed at the Usedom Music Festival and in Tallinn in September as well as on the 'Nutcracker Reimagined' tour of Germany and Switzerland in December. www.baltic-sea-philharmonic.eu