

Riga Jurmala Music Festival announces formation of Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra

For the press
2 July 2021

On 2 July 2021, the Riga Jurmala Music Festival has announced that musicians from the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Concertgebouworkest, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra will come together to honour the great Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons. Under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner, the Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra will debut at this year's Riga Jurmala Music Festival's opening weekend (16 – 18 July) in lieu of the previously announced Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, which withdrew due to COVID-19-related circumstances. The Festival has further announced modified admission procedures for the first weekend, resulting in markedly increased capacities.

The creation of the Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra was triggered by the recent cancellation of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra due to COVID-19-related issues. Less than four weeks before the first performance, the musicians of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra mobilised to create a bespoke orchestra comprising members of their own orchestra as well as those from the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Concertgebouworkest, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, united in their fervent admiration for Mariss Jansons. With the approval of Jansons' spouse, Irina Jansons, the new ensemble is named the Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra.

"Mariss loved all the musicians in his orchestras and the musicians loved him. And I think this mutual emotional bond could also be felt by the audience in the performances. He was a great admirer of Claudio Abbado and his Lucerne Festival Orchestra; somehow Mariss had always wished for something similar. It means a lot to me that this wish is now being granted to him," explains **Irina Jansons**.

Thomas Reif, concertmaster of the Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra and First Concertmaster of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, commented: "We are extremely honoured and excited to form a festival orchestra dedicated to our beloved Mariss Jansons. After such a long time of distancing from friends and colleagues, it will be a sign of hope for us all to perform together with musicians he inspired across Europe, in the safe surroundings that the Riga Jurmala Music Festival so generously provides."

The Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra will perform the previously announced programme with conductor John Eliot Gardiner, which includes Schumann's Symphony No. 2 and Brahms' Symphony No. 1, as well as Mozart's Piano Concert No. 20 in D minor (interpreted by Yuja Wang) and Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor (interpreted by András Schiff).

Martin T: son Engstroem, Artistic Director of the Riga Jurmala Music Festival, commented: "Any last-minute cancellation tasks a festival, but when it is one of Europe's leading orchestras, you do not have many options. We understand and regret the cancellation of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and look forward to welcoming them back to a future edition of the festival. The way their musicians selflessly rose to the challenge of initiating this new and exciting ensemble in such a short period of time left us in awe; we are so happy to have collaborated with them in the creation of it. Their colleagues in their own and in the five other orchestras answered their appeal very quickly, even though many of them had to disrupt vacation plans. We are extremely grateful and look forward to applauding their achievement in just a few weeks."

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The Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra is not the first time the Riga Jurmala Music Festival has brought musicians linked to Mariss Jansons together. Earlier this year, the Festival announced it had commissioned a documentary dedicated to honouring Jansons that is due to be broadcast in early 2022.

For the first time, Jansons' story will be told through the eyes of the musicians from the four ensembles for which Jansons was either Music Director or Chief Conductor: the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Concertgebouworkest and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Paying tribute to the legacy of a conductor that marked each of them, the orchestras will contribute specially filmed performances.

'Mariss Jansons: A Tale of Four Orchestras' is directed and conceived by Peter Maniura, the award-winning television producer and director with more than twenty-five years' experience in music and arts broadcasting at the BBC, the European Broadcasting Union and independently.

A short video previewing the documentary can be viewed at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlzXtcsCbSo&feature=youtu.be

Modified Admission Procedures for the Opening Weekend and Increased Capacity

Consistent with the Riga Jurmala Music Festival's policy of prioritizing the health and safety of the audience, the artists and the staff, the Festival has decided that for the first weekend of 16 to 18 July it will allow admission exclusively to ticketholders who provide proof of full vaccination at least 14 days prior or a positive COVID-19 PCR test dated within the last 180 days from which they have recovered. Proof can be provided by a valid EU Digital Covid-19 Certificate in a digital or paper form; for non-EU residents, the Festival will also accept all other proof approved by the Latvian Government. This decision will offer the most unrestricted performance experience to audiences since members of the public will not be required to wear masks or to adhere to social distancing measures. As a result, capacities at all concerts are increased to 100% and new tickets will be put on sale beginning July 2, 2021.

Existing ticketholders have already been advised about the change in the admission procedure and given the option to be reimbursed. The Festival will continue to monitor the situation and adjust its ticketing policies in accordance with government regulations. It will announce its decisions regarding admission at least 14 days before each subsequent weekend of this summer's Riga Jurmala Music Festival. More information about the ticketing policy can be found on the website of the Festival: www.riga-jurmala.com

"For the Festival to take place, we must strictly follow all the necessary health and safety requirements while endeavouring to ensure the best artist and visitor experience. To do so, we must remain flexible and be ready to react to all possible changes, government decisions and other COVID-19-related circumstances. We are grateful to our visitors and artists for their understanding and support," says **Zane Čulkstēna**, CEO of the Riga Jurmala Music Festival. "This is going to be a Festival full of positive surprises, with the newly established Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra being one of them!"

Notes to Editors

The **Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra** represents the posthumous realization of Mariss Jansons' dream. The renowned Latvian conductor often expressed the wish to bring together musicians from the European orchestras with whom he felt the greatest affinity. Many of the musicians who agreed to participate in the inaugural performances of the Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra, which includes members from the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Concertgebouworkest, the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, are united in their fervent admiration for Mariss Jansons with whom they collaborated musically and counted as a friend.

The Riga Jurmala Music Festival

In 2019, the Riga Jurmala Music Festival launched its inaugural season with 20 symphonic and chamber music concerts scheduled across four musical weekends. Around 16,000 visitors gathered in Riga and Jurmala from 50 countries, including the UK, Germany, Japan, Argentina, Israel, Mexico,

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Thailand and Australia. Over four weekends, more than 450 musicians — four of the world's best orchestras conducted by top conductors Zubin Mehta, Mikhail Pletnev, Gianandrea Noseda and Susanna Mälkki, as well as brilliant soloists of different generations – came to perform in Riga and Jurmala.

The complete programme for the opening weekend of the Riga Jurmala Music Festival is:

Friday 16th July 7 p.m.

Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra

John Eliot Gardiner conductor

Yuja Wang piano

Mozart – Schumann

Friday 17th July 12 p.m.

The King's Singers "Finding Harmony"

Friday 17th July 7 p.m.

Matthias Goerne baritone

Víkingur Ólafsson piano

Schubert – Schumann – Brahms

Sunday 18th July 12 p.m.

Víkingur Ólafsson piano

Rameau – Debussy

Sunday 18th July 7 p.m.

Mariss Jansons Festival Orchestra

John Eliot Gardiner conductor

András Schiff piano

Schumann – Brahms