

RIGA JURMALA

MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Major new international festival for Latvia announced,
launching summer 2019**

Riga Jurmala Music Festival

**Artistic Director Martin Engstroem introduces concept of festival
weekends anchored around leading orchestras**

- **Riga Jurmala Festival features four powerful weekends, each anchored by a leading international orchestra and conductor, with a range of symphonic and chamber concerts and solo recitals with leading stars and young up-and-coming talent**
- **First year to feature Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Mariss Jansons; Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/Zubin Mehta; London Symphony Orchestra/Gianandrea Noseda; Russian National Orchestra/Mikhail Pletnev**
- **Soloists include pianists Murray Perahia, Yuja Wang and Seong-Jin Cho, violinist Vadim Repin and cellist Mischa Maisky**
- **Young talent includes pianists Jan Lisiecki, Lukas Geniušas and Denis Kozhukhin, violinist Alexandra Conunova, cellist Edgar Moreau and soprano Ying Fang**
- **Martin Engstroem (Verbier Festival founder and director) appointed Artistic Director to ensure highest artistic calibre for the Festival**
- **Festival to expand to six weekends in 2020 and eight in 2021**

Latvia's historic capital, Riga, and the country's flagship seaside resort, Jurmala, are the two settings for a new music festival that promises to give music lovers a combination of artists and repertoire that aims to rank with the best in the world.

The festival will comprise four intense weekends, taking place between 21 July and 1 September and all featuring classical musicians of the highest international distinction. The programme will expand to six weekends in 2020 and eight weekends in 2021.

Appropriately, the inaugural concert on 21 July 2019 will be conducted by **Mariss Jansons**, a native of Riga and a figure who exemplifies the position that Latvia – a country of less than two million people –

has achieved in the musical world. He will conduct the **Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra**, of which he has been Chief Conductor since 2003.

A list of just some of the other artists appearing in 2019 proves that the Riga Jurmala Music Festival is getting off to a spectacular start: **Zubin Mehta** will conduct the **Israel Philharmonic Orchestra**; **Gianandrea Noseda** the **London Symphony Orchestra**, and **Mikhail Pletnev** the **Russian National Orchestra**. Pianists include **Murray Perahia**, **Yuja Wang** and **Seong-Jin Cho**, violinist **Vadim Repin** and cellist **Mischa Maisky** – who, like Mariss Jansons, was born in Riga.

The opening gala will take place in Riga – at the Latvian National Opera, a splendid gilded theatre dating from the 1860s. Jurmala's Dzintari Concert Hall will host the rest of the festival. Recently the object of a stylish, multi-million-euro renovation, the Dzintari Concert Hall offers both an intimate timber-built venue, dating from 1936 and accommodating 500 people, and a 2,000-seat space which opened in the early 1960s and celebrates the summer by being open-sided.

This new Latvian festival is under the artistic direction of **Martin Engstroem**. Engstroem returns to the Baltic – he was born across the water in Sweden – from the mountains of Switzerland, where he continues to run the Verbier Festival: since he founded it 25 years ago the Verbier Festival has become synonymous with the world's greatest musicians and with the development of exceptional young talent.

He collaborates on the Riga Jurmala Music Festival with Associate Artistic Director, **Miguel Esteban**, co-founder of the Verbier Festival, COO of London-based production company Idili Live and associate producer of Mamma Mia! The Party.

Supporting the Riga Jurmala Music Festival is the **BMS Foundation**, a philanthropic body dedicated to creating world-class classical music events in Latvia. The Foundation is looking forward to building on the success of the Baltic Musical Seasons concert series it launched in 2017, and which has featured such Latvian luminaries as conductor Andris Nelsons, soprano Kristīne Opolais and mezzo-soprano Elīna Garanča, and international visitors like Antonio Pappano (with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia), Juan Diego Flórez, Joshua Bell, Denis Matsuev, John Malkovich, the Vienna Philharmonic and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

As well as creating a magical event of great prestige, the team behind the Riga Jurmala Music Festival is committed to providing a major platform for young talent from all over the Baltics and abroad through performances and opportunities to work with the world's greatest artists in an atmosphere of cultural exchange.

There is also a shared vision to ensure that festival events are available to the widest possible audience by offering a range of ticket prices across all the events.

In launching the new festival today [30 Nov 2018], **Petr Aven**, Head of Trustees, BMS Foundation, said:

“Latvia is renowned for producing exceptional musical talent and for its love of music which has brought joy and meaning to people all over the world. After two years of concerts under the label of Baltic Musical Seasons, we wanted to go to the next level and build a new festival to thank the music lovers of Latvia to create a magical event that would attract international audiences.

“It was clear to me on first meeting Martin Engstroem that there isn't anyone better suited to leading the Riga Jurmala Music Festival's artistic programming. Martin brings an unmatched range of experience,

knowledge and passion for music and musicians. The 2019 program is a preview of the quality we are swiftly working together to achieve, featuring a combination of both established and up-coming artists drawn from the pool of Latvian and international talent.”

Martin Engstroem, Artistic Director Riga Jurmala Music Festival, said:

“I am impressed and motivated by the BMS Foundation’s desire to create and invest in a world-class music festival in the beautiful and historical city of Riga and in its famous neighbour Jurmala. It is our desire to offer the local population the very best artists and orchestras in classical music and, at the same time, try to convince the traveling music lover to discover Riga and Jurmala. I greatly look forward to developing these ideas with the Foundation and the public of Latvia. We will use our connections and long experience in presenting classical music events to help position the Riga Jurmala Music Festival as a top event and attractive destination for the stars of classical music.”

Both Riga and Jurmala are readily accessible from Riga’s international airport. Latvia’s capital, a former Hanseatic port situated at the mouth of the River Daugava, has become a vibrant and sophisticated tourist destination. Old Riga is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the city’s architecture is astonishingly rich and varied, encompassing a medieval cathedral, timber houses, splendid art nouveau apartment blocks (some designed by the father of film-maker Sergei Eisenstein), four barrel-roofed zeppelin hangars that now house the Central Market, the imposing 1950s Academy of Sciences, and a National Library (known as the Castle of Light) which opened in 2014, the year Riga was European Capital of Culture. There are proposals for a major new concert hall in the city and comprehensive restoration is planned for the Wagnersaal, a small 19th-century hall situated in the street named after Richard Wagner, who lived and worked in Riga in the 1830s.

Latvia, which joined the EU in 2004, benefits from excellent physical and digital infrastructure and a strong, distinctive cultural identity. Music, especially choral singing, is deeply embedded in the country’s being. The Latvian Song and Dance Festival is a stadium event which takes place every five years and the 2018 Song and Dance Celebration, marking Latvia’s 100th birthday, attracted an estimated 40,000 participants and some 500,000 spectators (more than a quarter of the country’s population!). In addition to the artists already mentioned, musicians of international stature who currently represent Latvia’s thriving tradition in classical music include the singers Marina Rebeka, Maija Kovaļevska, Inese Galante, Aleksandrs Antoņenko and Egils Siliņš, violinists Gidon Kremer and Baiba Skride, accordionist Ksenija Sidorova and composers Pēteris Vasks and Arturs Maskats.

Tickets for the festival will go on sale in February 2019.

Full details of the festival weekends will be announced then.

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LIVE FROM 11am (GMT) / 1pm (EET) and available afterwards

#RigaJurmalaMusicFestival

***** IMAGES ATTACHED *****

For further press information, pictures, please contact **Victoria Bevan**

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2019 PROGRAMME (subject to change)

Weekend 1: 19-21 July

Highlights include:

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Mariss Jansons in two concerts with violinist **Julian Rachlin** and pianist **Rudolf Buchbinder** as soloists. Rachlin and Buchbinder will also give a chamber music recital together, while there will be further morning recitals from pianists **Lukas Geniusas** and **Martin James Bartlett**

Weekend 2: 16-18 August

Highlights include:

Russian National Orchestra/Mikhail Pletnev in two concerts with cellist **Mischa Maisky** and pianist **Daniel Lozakovich** as soloists. Maisky will also give an evening recital with pianist **Lily Maisky**, while pianist **Denis Kozhukin** gives two morning recitals, joined in the first by violinist **Alexandra Conunova**.

Weekend 3: 23-25 August

Highlights include:

Israel Philharmonic Orchestra/Zubin Mehta in two concerts with pianists **Murray Perahia** and **Yuja Wang**, who opens the weekend in recital. Among the morning recitalists for the weekend are pianist **Jan Lisiecki**.

Weekend 4: 30 August-1 September

Highlights include:

London Symphony Orchestra/Gianandrea Noseda in two concerts with pianist **Seong-Jin Cho** and violinist **Vadim Repin**, followed by a solo recital by pianist **Lucas Debargue**. Among the morning recitalists are cellist **Edgar Moreau** and soprano **Ying Fang**.

Tickets for the festival will go on sale in February 2019.

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