

Kremerata Baltica

Artistic director – Gidon Kremer

Twenty years ago Gidon Kremer created the ideal conditions for a musical revolution. The internationally acclaimed violinist unveiled his compelling new initiative at Austria's Lockenhaus Festival in the summer of 1997, giving life to what was destined soon to become one of the world's finest chamber orchestras. Kremerata Baltica – comprising twenty-three outstanding young musicians from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – captivated its first audience with playing of unrestrained joy and exuberance and with the variety and vitality of its programming. Those qualities remain essential to its identity as the ensemble enters its 20th anniversary season.

Kremerata Baltica was conceived as Gidon Kremer's 50th birthday present to himself. The new orchestra, which immediately embodied its founder's tireless energy and visionary artistry, arose from the Latvian artist's determination to share the fruits of his rich experience as a soloist and chamber musician with young colleagues from the Baltic States and to enhance the region's cultural life. The learning process allowed no room for artistic compromise; in fact, the ensemble's ethos has been ruled from the beginning by ideals of artistic excellence and adventure. Its outlook has also drawn on an innovative approach to programming, one open to artistic experiment, creative daring and bold challenges to convention.

When interviewed by the *New York Times* in 1999, Gidon Kremer described Kremerata Baltica as a musical democracy: "open-minded, self-critical, a continuation of my musical spirit". Its performances, he continued, should always deliver "a sense of spontaneous music-making that makes a concert dramatic and sensuous, a continuation of the creative process". His high aspirations for the ensemble have been realised with striking consistency ever since.

The headline events in Kremerata Baltica's history and the achievements of its members, past and present, contain ample material for a book-length study. Since the turn of the 21st century, the orchestra has performed in over 50 countries, appeared in more than 600 cities and given over 1,000 concerts. It has secured lasting support from the governments of its three home nations. In addition, it has created a discography of over two dozen albums, including the 2002 ECHO Klassik and Grammy Award-winning *After Mozart* on Nonesuch Records and other critically acclaimed titles on the Deutsche Grammophon and ECM labels. The ensemble's albums of works by Georges Enescu and Mieczysław Weinberg were both nominated for Grammy Award, while its recent recording of Shostakovich's piano concertos with Anna Vinnitskaya for Alpha Classics won the ECHO Klassik 2016 in the category of "Concert Recording (Music of the 20th/21st Centuries)".

Since 2003 Kremerata Baltica holds its own festival in Latvia. In recent seasons the ensemble has pushed back the boundaries of its work to include events such as "To Russia with Love", a concert staged at Berlin's Philharmonie in 2013 to promote the cause of human rights in Russia, and "All About Gidon", a part-scenic autobiographical show in which Gidon Kremer performs works close to his heart and speaks about the life and career of an artist. Since 2013 Kremerata Baltica and Gidon Kremer have partnered the famous Russian mime artist Slava Polunin and his

Academy of Fools in "Snow Symphony", a joint project based on Polunin's pioneering "SnowShow". In 2015 the ensemble launched its creative project "Masks and Faces", collaboration between Gidon Kremer and the Russian painter, polemicist and philosopher Maxim Kantor. The latest Kremerata Baltica project "Pictures from the East" is a joint venture with a Syrian artist, Nizar Ali Badr, which focuses on the dramatic situation in the Middle East and the current refugee problem.

Since its early years Kremerata Baltica has worked with soloists and conductors of the highest stature. The ensemble's characteristic responsiveness and intense focus – qualities that have been fostered and sustained under Gidon Kremer's leadership – have developed thanks not least to collaborations with the soprano Jessye Norman, pianists Martha Argerich, Evgeny Kissin, Oleg Maisenberg, Mikhail Pletnev and Daniil Trifonov, violinists Lisa Batiashvili, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Didier Lockwood, Vadim Repin and Thomas Zehetmair, and cellists Yo-Yo Ma, Mischa Maisky and the late Boris Pergamenschikov. Its artistry has also deepened over the course of projects and tours conducted by, among others, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Christoph Eschenbach, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Heinz Holliger, Roman Kofman, Kent Nagano, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Saulius Sondeckis.

Kremerata Baltica's individual identity is closely bound to the diversity and imagination of its programmes. Its players have gained distinction with performances of works from within and beyond the mainstream repertoire. They have given many world premiere performances, including compositions by Lera Auerbach, Leonid Desyatnikov, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli, Victor Kissine, Artūrs Maskats, Arvo Pärt, Georgs Pēlecis, Alexander Raskatov, Raminta Šerkšnytė, Valentin Silvestrov, and Pēteris Vasks. The variety of the orchestra's repertoire is mirrored in its discography, which encompasses everything from Mozart's complete violin concertos with Gidon Kremer, orchestra versions of Quartets by Schubert and Beethoven, Enescu's Octet and Astor Piazzolla's *Tango Ballet* to world premiere recordings of works by Giya Kancheli, Victor Kissine and Stevan Kovacs Tickmayer.

Many of the ensemble's recordings document its close association with particular composers. To mark Kremerata Baltica's 20th anniversary a new album of all Mieczyslaw Weinberg's chamber symphonies has been released on the ECM label in the January 2017. Another recent album with ECM, released in October 2015 to mark Giya Kancheli's 80th birthday year, included world premiere recordings of the Georgian composer's *Chiaroscuro* for violin, string orchestra and percussion and *Twilight* for two violins and string orchestra, with Gidon Kremer and Patricia Kopatchinskaja as soloists. Other landmark recordings in Kremerata Baltica's catalogue include *Hymns and Prayers*, an anthology of works by Kancheli, César Franck and Tickmayer; *The Art of Instrumentation: Homage to Glenn Gould*, comprising eleven new scores and arrangements that quote from or are inspired by works – mostly by Johann Sebastian Bach – recorded by the inimitable Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, and Deutsche Grammophon's 2015 release of *New Seasons*, featuring Gidon Kremer as the soloist in Philip Glass's *Violin Concerto No 2* together with works by G. Kancheli, A. Pärt, and S. Umebayashi.

Kremerata Baltica marked its 20th anniversary together with Gidon Kremer's 70th birthday in the season of 2016-2017, with tours in the Middle East, United States, Asia and an extensive tour around Europe with such invited guests as Martha

Argerich, Khatia Buniatishvili, Tatiana Grindenko, and several young rising stars - Clara Jumi Kang, Lucas Debargue, Pablo Ferrandez, and Martynas Stakionis.

After performing at summer festivals of Sound of the Dolomites, Schleswig Holstein Music Festival, Chopin and his Europe, and Sion Festival 2018, Kremerata Baltica starts the season of 2018-2019 with their annual festival in Latvia in the middle of September. Next, the orchestra will be heading to Dublin, reappearing in Ireland's capital after several years, after bringing the same program to Moscow, a brand new hall Zaryadye. Kremerata Baltica and Gidon Kremer will stay in Moscow for a bit longer - to give 8 performances in a row of the marvellous Snow Symphony together with the Slava Polunin's SNOWSHOW team.

November will be marked with extended tour with Latvian organist Iveta Apkalna in program "Bach and the Baltics", starting with a warm-up performance in Iveta's hometown - Rezekne, Latvia – followed by another 7 concerts in Switzerland and Germany. Later in November, Kremerata Baltica will give a couple performances in Birmingham – one together with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, another - with Maestro Kremer.

In beginning of December, Kremerata Baltica will perform in Lithuania – Klaipeda and Vilnius - together with Lithuanian conductor Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla and Gidon Kremer. Calendar year of 2018 will end with a tour in Italy – together with Kremer and cellist Mario Brunello in an intriguing Mahler program, visiting Mantova, Bologna, Cremona, Torino, and Milan.

Later in the season Kremerata Baltica will tour with a brand new semi-theatrical project related to circus, in collaboration with Maestro Kremer and German artist Robert Wicke from the famous "Cirkus Roncalli". In spring, chamber orchestra will present Tango program in Berlin Tango Weekend, followed by "Last words" program based on music by Haydn and Shostakovich, with performances in Belgrade, Zagreb, Cuenca Festival in Spain.