

KREMERATA BALTICA

GIDON KREMER - SOLOIST & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In 1997, Austria's legendary Lockenhaus chamber music festival was witness to a small revolution when, beside many distinguished musicians, the violinist Gidon Kremer presented a brand new orchestra: Kremerata Baltica, comprising 27 young players from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, conquered the discerning audience, injecting new blood into the festival with their exuberance, energy and joy in playing, Kremerata Baltica, an educational project with a long-term vision, was Kremer's 50th birthday present to himself: a way of passing on his wisdom to young colleagues from the Baltic states while making no compromises on artistic standards as he nurtured and inspired musical life in the region.

The talented group of students, who also benefited from the mentoring of Lithuanian conductor Saulius Sondeckis, soon developed into a world-class professional ensemble. In 2001 the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, reviewing another Lockenhaus concert, judged that "musical intensity on this level is rarely experienced". The chamber music festival, with its open-minded, sometimes experimental atmosphere, remained the orchestra's artistic home, but Kremerata Baltica has cemented its international reputation in major concert venues around the world.

The orchestra, which has its offices in Riga, is now supported by the governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Its members, all outstanding musical personalities, are selected through a rigorous auditioning process and play as a stable ensemble. Among the celebrated soloists with whom Kremerata Baltica has played are soprano Jessye Norman, pianists Mikhail Pletnev, Yevgeny Kissin and Oleg Maisenberg, violinists Thomas Zehetmair and Vadim Repin and cellists Boris Pergamenshikov and Yo Yo Ma; conductors have included Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Christoph Eschenbach, Kent Nagano, Heinz Holliger and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Each of these musicians has contributed to shaping the chamber orchestra.

Essential to Kremerata Baltica's artistic personality is its creative approach to programming, which often looks beyond the mainstream and has given rise to numerous world premieres of works by composers such as Kancheli, Vasks, Desyatnikov and Raskatov. The orchestra's wide-ranging and carefully chosen repertoire is also showcased in its many and much-praised CD recordings, such as *Eight Seasons*, pairing Vivaldi's set of concertos with Piazzolla's Argentinian sequence, and *Silencio*, compositions by contemporary composers: Pärt, Glass und Martynov. *After Mozart*, a 21st century take on the composer, won an internationally coveted Grammy Award, while Mozart's five violin concertos, recorded live at the Salzburg Festival in 2006, his 200th anniversary year, have been released on the Nonesuch label.

12 years into its existence, Kremerata Baltica is known across the world, having made successful tours of Japan, Australia, the USA, Latin America and, of course, Europe, where festival appearances have included Baden-Baden, Schleswig-Holstein, Verbier, Salzburg and the BBC Proms in London.

While Gidon Kremer remains very much an active guiding force for the orchestra – for instance in the context of the comedy project launched in 2008-09, *Being Gidon Kremer: The Rise and Fall of a Classical Musician*, a collaboration with Menuhin School-trained duo Igudesman & Joo – Kremerata Baltica is becoming ever more independent. The children of Kremer's small revolution have long since grown up, but they have retained all their youthful joy and energy.