



# Energy, rhythm, colour: Kristjan Järvi's extravaganza in Pärnu

By [Alexander Hall](#), 16 July 2022

Reader, I was at a musical happening last night. I really was. Many hours later I'm still struggling to make sense of it all. Essentially, this concert at the [Pärnu Music Festival](#) was a dual celebration: honouring both [Kristjan Järvi's](#) 50th birthday and 85 years of the life and work of Philip Glass. The official billing was "Nordic Amazonia", with a series of compositions by Järvi himself and Glass' *Águas da Amazônia*, though it was difficult to tell where one piece ended and the next began, so seamless were the transitions, so massive the musical flow. Rather like the mighty waters of the Amazon River itself.



Kristjan Järvi  
© Kaupo Kikkas | Pärnu Music Festival

There was a time when cinemas showed the main film in a continuous loop. You could enter at any point and then some time later you were back to the scene where you started. The sensation that I gained in this extravaganza was much the same: I could have come and gone and picked up where I had left. At the start of the evening (but was it really the start?) there was a gentle trickling of water and repeated harp notes, with light effects in blues, pinks and purples projected onto the stage, accompanied by a distant rumble like thunder (or was it merely backstage furniture being moved?). Then the members of the [Baltic Sea Philharmonic](#) slowly advanced, trance-like, and sat down in preordained positions on the floor. Finally, Järvi himself appeared and lowered himself onto his haunches to face his musicians.

But was this really the conductor? Here was somebody who was not a traditional timekeeper but a kind of toreador, moving forward, weaving in and around smaller groups of musicians, retreating, and then in line with his own choreography, assaying forth again, performing little leaps, arms and legs working like a dynamo, fingers pointing, palms outstretched, hands used percussively.



Kristjan Järvi conducts the Baltic Sea Philharmonic  
© Kaupo Kikkas | Pärnu Music Festival

Taken altogether, the musical elements were quite astonishing. Sustaining a performance time of over 90 minutes entirely from memory, with the interspersing of instrumental solos including a fine contribution from the violinist [David Nebel](#), was quite an achievement in collective music-making. The ear was caught by individual string and percussion players, a trumpet obbligato and a Herculean tuba echoing the factory horns of times past as well as terrifying rasps from cellos and basses sounding and feeling much like an itch that needed to be scratched. There were distant bird calls and jungle noises, wordless singing, episodes for big band swing, accentuated by jazz-inspired inflections of the rhythm.

Ah yes, the rhythm. Minimalist music drives some people to distraction. Others find it mesmerising, trance-inducing, euphoric in its cumulative impact. This audience was in a wild delirium by what seemed to be the end, urged by Järvi into rhythmic clapping which put the efforts of happy-clappy members of church congregations into the shade. Rhythm is what ultimately matters: earlier the music had erupted and subsided, swelled and contracted, the underlying pulse a little slower and then a little faster, the mood alternating between the calm and meditative and then more ruffled and agitated. At times quite the paraphernalia of a Latin American fiesta with fireworks popping in the background.



Kristjan Järvi and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic  
© Kaupo Kikkas | Pärnu Music Festival

The stroboscopic lighting effects did as little to suggest a deeply Nordic connection as did wide stretches of the music. No hint of Northern Lights, no polar chill, instead splashes of intense reds and oranges on stage. But as an exercise in tearing down the barriers of convention and conveying a pseudo-religious experience this was hard to beat, with all sensory faculties in overdrive.

Reader, I for one was not amongst the converted.

*Alexander's press trip was funded by the Pärnu Music Festival and Visit Estonia*

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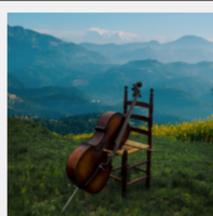
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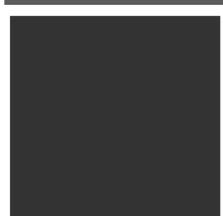


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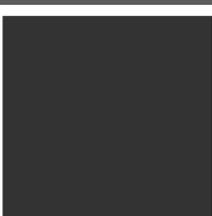


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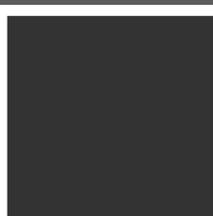
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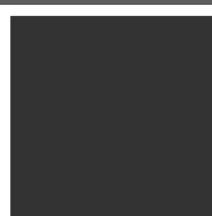
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### Alexander Hall

Alexander Hall divides his time between London and Hamburg, having spent a lifetime writing in some form or other: fiction, academic research, educational materials and professional translations. He has been an avid concert-goer from his teenage years with fond memories of many of the giants of the past, including Klemperer, Karajan, Böhm, Bernstein and Carlos Kleiber. For him the symphony orchestra is one of the greatest artistic creations of all time.

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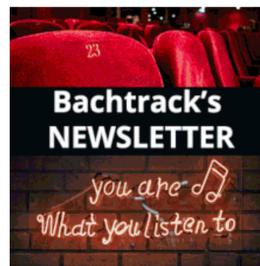
Reviewed at [Pärnu Concert Hall](#), Pärnu on 15 July 2022

### PROGRAMME

- Glass, *Águas da Amazônia*
- Järvi, *In Horizons*
- Järvi, *Nebula*
- Järvi, *Nordic Maiden*
- Järvi, *Aurora*, for violin, percussion and string orchestra
- Järvi, *Runic Prayer*
- Järvi, *Kirbu Epiphany*

### PERFORMERS

- [Kristjan Järvi](#), Conductor
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- [David Nebel](#), Violin



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*Stefan Pillhofer*, 3rd July

Mit „Midnight Sun“ präsentiert die Baltic Sea Philharmonic ein spezielles Konzertkonzept, bei dem die Werke nicht einfach hintereinander gespielt wurden.

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*David Renke*, 20th September

Die Baltic Sea Philharmonic bringt mit ihrem Programm baltischer Komponisten den Puls des Nordens in den Münchner Herkulesaal.

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*Michael Vieth*, 11th July

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