

Usedom Music Prize winner Charlotte Melkonian at the Peenemünde power station

Outstanding cello talent Charlotte Melkonian (13) opens the Usedomer Musikfestival with a concert of peace and freedom in Peenemünde

19 September to 10 October · Featured country Sweden · Martin Fröst · Lemon Squeezy · Christina Nilsson · Martin Tingvall · Annett Renneberg

Seebad Heringsdorf, 18 September 2026 – When the wild geese come down from Sweden in the mild autumn light and cross Usedom on their way south, and the island's 42 kilometres of brilliant white sand belong to walkers again, the **33rd Usedomer Musikfestival** begins. It opens on **19 September** in the most charged concert hall of the Baltic Sea region: the **power station in Peenemünde**, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's largest industrial monument and today part of the Peenemünde Historical Technical Museum. The soloist of the opening night is **13-year-old cellist Charlotte Melkonian**, winner of the **Usedom Music Prize 2026**. Together with the **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** under **Robert Treviño**, she gives a concert of peace and freedom at a site once built for war. Before the first note, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Germany, **Veronika Wand-Danielsson**, gives the **welcome address**. Until **10 October**, **30 events** with some **700 artists** follow. The focus is on **Sweden**.

Charlotte Melkonian - a 13-year-old at the heart of the opening

Born in 2013, the cellist of Armenian descent has been a junior student at the Berlin University of the Arts since 2023, in the cello class of Prof. Jens Peter Maintz and mentored by Prof. **David Geringas**, who celebrates his own 80th birthday at this year's festival. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in New York in 2024 and this year won the use of a cello by Stefano Scarampella from the German Musical Instrument Fund. "Charlotte Melkonian is an exceptional talent on the violoncello," says the festival's dramaturge **Dr Jan Brachmann**. "For her age she shows remarkable maturity."

On the opening night she receives the **Usedom Music Prize 2026**, awarded annually to young artists of the Baltic Sea region and endowed with 5,000 euros by the festival together with the Hamburg-based Oscar und Vera Ritter Foundation. She plays Tchaikovsky's **Rococo Variations op. 33** with the Baltic

Sea Philharmonic, the orchestra the festival founded in 2008 with musicians from all ten countries around the Baltic Sea. Stenhammar's "Sången" and Brahms's First Symphony frame the programme; **Robert Treviño**, the American conductor who led the orchestra here last year, is on the podium.

"When a 13-year-old plays in this place with an orchestra drawn from the Baltic Sea states, you can hear what a free and peaceful Europe makes possible," says festival director **Thomas Hummel**.

A welcome address in an anniversary year

That Sweden's ambassador opens the evening has a twofold occasion. Germany and Sweden have maintained diplomatic relations for **75 years** – and for Usedom the featured country is not a distant choice but a look into the island's own history: from **1648 to 1720** Usedom belonged to Swedish Pomerania, and in Western Pomerania the Swedish era lasted until 1815. As early as 1630, King **Gustavus Adolphus** landed with his army near Peenemünde, a few kilometres from the place where the festival begins this Saturday. The Swedish Embassy in Berlin has supported the country focus since the programme was announced in May. **Manuela Schwesig**, Minister-President of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, is also expected at the opening.

The venue: a power station built for war, a concert hall for peace

The Peenemünde power station once supplied the electricity for the Army Research Centre in which the Nazi regime developed its rocket weapons – a site of German war history at the northern tip of Usedom. Its turbine hall, unheated and raw, has become one of the festival's signature venues, and the contrast between the architecture of armament and the music performed inside it is the point.

The building's power as a place of public remembrance was on display only days ago: on **10 September**, Angela Merkel read here from her memoirs, "Freedom", to an audience of around 1,200. With the opening concert on 19 September, the festival hands the same hall to a 13-year-old and to an orchestra of the Baltic Sea neighbours.

The festival returns to Peenemünde on **3 October**, the Day of German Unity: Sweden's **Martin Fröst**, Artist in Residence 2026, plays Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the **NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra** under the Latvian conductor **Andris Poga**. The line-up recalls 1989, when freedom and democracy

came to Usedom and the Baltic states soon afterwards regained their independence.

Three weeks of Sweden

Since 1999 the festival has put one Baltic Sea country at the centre of each season as a "Podium of the Baltic Sea"; in 2026 it is Sweden. Second Artist in Residence is **Lemon Squeezy**, Sweden's barbershop world champion quartet of 2025: after their beach concert in Ahlbeck on **24 September**, the four sing ABBA hits with soloists of the Baltic Sea Philharmonic on **25 September** in Świnoujście and on **26 September** at the Grand ABBA Gala in Heringsdorf, marking **Benny Andersson's 80th birthday**. Soprano **Christina Nilsson**, who made her Bayreuth debut in 2025 and sang "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera, sings Sibelius to Richard Strauss in Heringsdorf on **1 October**. "Tatort" composer **Martin Tingvall** plays his solo programme "When Light Returns" at the Villa Esplanade in Heringsdorf on **24 September**, and on **27 September** actress **Annett Renneberg** reads from Selma Lagerlöf's "Nils Holgersson" at St. Mary's Church in Usedom Town, accompanied by pianist **Hideyo Harada**.

Chamber music and anniversaries run through the three weeks: the nyckelharpa in Liepe, pianist Niklas Sivelöv in Krummin, the composers Laura Netzel and Amanda Maier in Ahlbeck, Manuel de Falla's **150th birthday** in Zinnowitz on 23 September, the **400th birthday of Queen Christina** with the ensemble NeoBarock, and **David Geringas**, who celebrates his **80th birthday** and 20 years of his masterclass at Stolpe Castle on 4 October. On **10 October**, Martin Fröst and pianist **Roland Pöntinen** bring the festival to a close at St. Peter's Church in Wolgast.

About the Usedomer Musikfestival

Since 1994 the Usedomer Musikfestival has been dedicated to the music of the Baltic Sea region, with a different guest country each year. In 2008 it founded the Baltic Sea Philharmonic. Past guests include Anne-Sophie Mutter, Mstislav Rostropovich and the New York Philharmonic.

Dates (selection)

- **Sat 19 Sep, 8:00 pm** · Power Station of the Peenemünde Museum · Opening Concert with Charlotte Melkonian
- **Thu 24 Sep, 2:00 pm** · Pier, Seebad Ahlbeck · Beach Concert Lemon Squeezy
- **Thu 24 Sep, 7:30 pm** · Villa Esplanade, Seebad Heringsdorf · Martin Tingvall

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- **Fri 25 Sep, 7:30 pm** · Miejski Dom Kultury, Świnoujście · Tribute to ABBA
- **Sat 26 Sep, 7:30 pm** · Kaiserbädersaal, Seebad Heringsdorf · Grand ABBA Gala
- **Sun 27 Sep, 5:00 pm** · St. Mary's Church, Usedom Town · Annett Renneberg reads "Nils Holgersson"
- **Thu 1 Oct, 7:30 pm** · Protestant Church, Seebad Heringsdorf · Christina Nilsson
- **Sat 3 Oct, 8:00 pm** · Power Station of the Peenemünde Museum · Martin Fröst and NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra
- **Sat 10 Oct, 7:30 pm** · St. Peter's Church, Wolgast · Closing Concert Martin Fröst

Tickets: all tourist offices, +49 (0) 38378 346-47, **www.usedomer-musikfestival.de**

Press photos

Print-quality press photos for download:
<https://usedomer-musikfestival.de/en/press/>

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