

Twelve-year-old cellist makes her Usedom debut at the opening of the Usedomer Musikfestival on 19 September with the Baltic Sea Philharmonic under Robert Treviño

An exceptional talent on the cello: Usedom Music Prize 2026 for Charlotte Melkonian

Seebad Heringsdorf, 7 May 2026 – The Usedom Music Prize 2026 goes to **Charlotte Melkonian**. The twelve-year-old cellist of Armenian descent receives the award jointly from the festival and the Hamburg-based **Oscar und Vera Ritter Foundation**. The prize will be presented at the festival opening on **19 September at the power station in Peenemünde**, where the prize-winner will play Tchaikovsky's **Rococo Variations op. 33** as soloist of the **Baltic Sea Philharmonic** under the direction of **Robert Treviño**.

Born in 2013, the young artist is regarded as a genuine marvel; her playing has the quality of a mother tongue, and she carries her audiences – whether at Carnegie Hall or the Berlin Philharmonie – with the assurance of a mature virtuoso. Since 2023 she has been a junior student at the Berlin University of the Arts in the cello class of **Prof. Jens Peter Maintz**, and she is additionally mentored by **Prof. David Geringas**. At the 2026 competition of the German Musical Instrument Fund (Deutscher Musikinstrumentenfonds) she won the use of a precious cello by Stefano Scarampella of Mantua.

"Charlotte Melkonian is an exceptional talent on the violoncello," says the festival's dramaturge **Dr Jan Brachmann**, explaining the choice. "She masters technical difficulties with the greatest ease and at the same time commands a beautiful, flexible tone. Her musical understanding of how to shape the pieces she plays is as unerring as it is unforced. For her age she shows remarkable maturity. The Usedomer Musikfestival is proud to be able to support Charlotte Melkonian with the Usedom Music Prize in partnership with the Oscar und Vera Ritter Foundation."

The Usedom Music Prize carries prize money of **5,000 euros**. It is endowed by the festival together with the Hamburg-based Oscar und Vera Ritter Foundation, which has devoted itself to supporting young talent in classical music for decades.

Opening concert at the power station in Peenemünde

The opening concert on **19 September at 8:00 pm at the power station in Peenemünde** is built on a Swedish-Russian-German triad: the interlude from Wilhelm Stenhammar's cantata "Sången" op. 44, Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations for cello and orchestra op. 33, and Brahms's Symphony No. 1 in C minor op. 68. With this concert the Baltic Sea Philharmonic – which emerged from the festival in 2008 and has stood ever since for the cultural bond between the ten Baltic Sea states – returns once more to Peenemünde: to a site once shaped by war, which is now to give sound to a longing for peace. The concert is conducted by the American conductor **Robert Treviño**, who lives in Lithuania, who inspired the orchestra last year and who this season deepens his love of the Baltic Sea region with this threefold arc of sound.

A line of distinguished prize-winners

The Usedom Music Prize is awarded annually to young artists from the Baltic Sea region. Recent winners include the Finnish violinist **Iidamari Ahonen** (2025), the Polish pianist **Joanna Aleksandra Sielicka** (2024), the Latvian cellist **Magdalena Ceple** (2023) and the Estonian violinist **Hans Christian Aavik** (2022). Earlier awards went to figures who are now internationally established, such as the horn player **Felix Klieser** (2014) and the violinist **Daniel Lozakovich** (2016).

About the Usedomer Musikfestival

Since 1994 the Usedomer Musikfestival has been dedicated to the art of the Baltic Sea region. For three weeks from September to October, the distinctive sounds of a different guest country each year fill the island. Artists such as Anne-Sophie Mutter, Mstislav Rostropovich, Gidon Kremer, Paavo Järvi, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Krzysztof Penderecki have appeared at the festival; with the week-long exclusive residency of the New York Philharmonic under Jaap van Zweden in Peenemünde, the festival drew worldwide attention in 2022. Since 2008 the Baltic Sea Philharmonic has been touring as the festival's ambassador in the great cultural capitals, from Berlin and Hamburg to Vienna, Paris, London and Brussels, and on to Stockholm, Helsinki and Hong Kong. In ancient churches, picturesquely situated castles and villas, in galleries and in imperial-era hotels, the festival stages the musical riches of the countries joined by the sea at the island's most exciting venues – from the historic power station in Peenemünde to the magnificent buildings of the imperial spas.

Programme

**Sat 19 Sep 2026, 8:00 pm · Power Station of the Peenemünde Museum ·
Opening Concert**

BALTIC SEA PHILHARMONIC · Robert Treviño (conductor) · Charlotte
Melkonian (cello)

Stenhammar: Interlude from "Sången" op. 44 · Tchaikovsky: Rococo Variations
op. 33 · Brahms: Symphony No. 1 in C minor op. 68

Full programme: **www.usedomer-musikfestival.de**

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Press contact: Alexander Datz, +49.176.741.61157

Usedomer Musikfestival | www.usedomer-musikfestival.de | presse@usedomer-musikfestival.de