



Be Embraced & Music of Today

Summer/Autumn 2026

Organised by the Western Balkans Youth Orchestra, Be Embraced & Music of Today 2026 are immersive orchestral and chamber music initiatives that brings together outstanding young musicians from across the Western Balkans, Europe, and beyond. The programme welcomes applicants aged 16 to 27 from the WB6 countries, the EU, and beyond who play an orchestral instrument professionally and have a background in advanced music studies or professional training. Spanning 48 days from late July to mid-September, the project offers a transformative artistic journey that combines high-level musical training, international collaboration, and cultural exchange.

At its core, the programme is both an educational platform and a touring performance experience. Participants engage in intensive residencies in Shkodra, Albania and Essen, Germany, where they work closely with distinguished European mentors through orchestral rehearsals, sectionals, and specialised chamber music masterclasses. These periods of focused artistic development are complemented by an international concert tour across the Western Balkans and Germany, featuring symphonic and chamber performances in prominent concert halls and historic venues.

The repertoire reflects both tradition and innovation, combining major works from composers such as Beethoven, Wagner, Britten, and Respighi with newly commissioned pieces by emerging Western Balkan composers.

The project Breathing reeds (WBYO residency in Germany) aims to actively promote contemporary music and provide fresh artistic inspiration by directly involving young musicians in the creation and performance of new works. The world premiere of Stefan Heucke's Accordion Concerto Op. 144 (Soloist Marko Kassi), alongside other new compositions, creates a dynamic creative space that combines artistic development with international collaboration.

This balance underscores the project's dual mission: to uphold the classical canon while actively supporting contemporary musical voices from the region.

Beyond performance, Be Embraced & Music of Today & Breathing reeds fosters a strong sense of community and professional growth. Young musicians collaborate across borders, build lasting artistic networks, and gain first-hand experience of life within a professional touring orchestra. The programme is fully funded, ensuring accessibility and allowing participants to focus entirely on their artistic development.

More than a summer programme, the project represents a platform for cultural dialogue, creative exploration, and personal transformation—uniting the next generation of musicians in a shared journey of excellence, collaboration, and discovery.