



**Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier  
at the European Concert of the Berliner Philharmoniker  
in Berlin  
on 1 May 2020**

I bid you all a warm welcome from the Philharmonie in Berlin.

There is a strange atmosphere here in this wonderful building, which is known around the world and held in great affection by all music lovers; this venue where otherwise many guests from across the globe come together. Today it is completely silent. There is no audience to experience what a small Berliner Philharmoniker ensemble will play today.

Perhaps there are one or two purists who will especially appreciate being able to listen to music undisturbed by any coughing or clearing of throats. But if we are honest, we would all like to sit in the midst of a large audience again.

What we will have the pleasure of experiencing on our screens today is the European Concert of the Berliner Philharmoniker. It was actually supposed to be staged in Tel Aviv during my state visit to Israel to mark the anniversary of the country's independence: Yom Ha'atzmaut. Like so many other things, this visit and the concert had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I very much regret that and I am quite certain that many people in Israel who were looking forward to the concert feel the same way!

However, no matter where this concert takes place, it will show you that Europe has a wealth of great music. It is part of our European culture and therefore our shared treasure trove!

We speak so many different languages on our continent and we have so many different ways of life. But we can only master the difficulties we all face today and in future if we stand together. That is particularly true at the current time, which is so hard for all of us.

Europe is our shared home – and it is virtually impossible to express this better than with music, this distinctive shared European language. Especially today, however, this gift presents us with a task.

We have to help each other – and we will help each other.

The musicians who will play for us today led by Kirill Petrenko represent more than themselves. When I thank them for the special concert they are performing for us, I am also thinking of the many freelance artists, indeed our entire cultural life, that is under particular threat due to this crisis. The livelihoods of many are at risk. They are dependent on assistance and I very much hope that the help provided will go where it is needed.

Art and culture which we can enjoy together are not expendable trivialities. We are rediscovering this at present. Perhaps more now than at other times we appreciate what we miss: we see that art and culture are indeed food for the soul.

I am looking forward to what will certainly be a very special concert – and I am looking forward to the time when we can again listen to music together in a concert hall.

All the best to you. And look out for each other.