

Jan Vogler: The Virtuoso

06/01/2026 Jan Vogler is one of the foremost cellists of our time. During the Dresdner Musikfestspiele festival, he takes the Porsche team on a drive through his musical hometown in his Taycan 4 Cross Turismo.

It's late morning as Jan Vogler clings to his Stradivari, as if embracing someone he loves, his eyes closed in total concentration. Almost no other instrument is as intimate as the cello, whose warm sound closely resembles the human voice. The stage is Semperoper Dresden, one of the most famous venues in the world. Friedrich Gulda's Concerto for Cello and Wind Orchestra – a true classic that masterfully alternates between jazz and classical, symphony and wind music – is being performed this Sunday morning as part of the music festival, of which Vogler is the Artistic Director.

The 61-year-old master cellist gently draws the bow across the strings of his instrument, which has been slightly amplified for this particular piece, before suddenly and energetically plucking again and playing at such breathtaking speed that the audience can hardly believe their eyes. A piece that seems to have been written for a virtuoso of his class. "For me," says Vogler, "music is most meaningful when it reaches and inspires people."

It's the day before, and Vogler has just finished rehearsal with the Brass Ensemble of the Berliner Philharmoniker and Anna Handler. He's driving his black Taycan 4 Cross Turismo along the autobahn between Berlin and Dresden, heading back to the city that has shaped his musical career. One and a half hours for a conversation about an extraordinary career that extends far beyond the boundaries of classical music. Vogler accelerates for just a moment and asks, "Do you hear anything? I only hear silence. Amazing!" He chose to forgo the optional Porsche Electric Sport Sound when configuring his car. Driving, he says, is for him also an issue of acoustics.

Jan Vogler has been a staunch supporter of electric mobility for two decades. For him, an electric Porsche is just as natural as the microphone-amplified Stradivari cello during the Gulda concert.

Could classical purists consider this to be reprehensible? "Even purists can tell when you're doing something seriously and with conviction," answers Vogler, obviously referring to both music and driving. Vogler travels to most of his performances in Germany in the Taycan he has owned for six months – he has already clocked up 17,000 concert kilometers on the odometer. While his electric sports car is charging at a fast-charging station with 300 kW, he sings the praise of the car's recuperation. He also casually mentions that he enjoys watching YouTube videos about new battery technologies and electric drives in his free time. According to his calculations, he has avoided around 70 kilograms of CO_2 on his drive to Berlin and back to Dresden again. "It's important to me personally to avoid emitting pollutants when I drive."

A global career that began in Dresden

Jan Vogler's career is, in many ways, that of a pioneer and trailblazer. He grew up in a musical household in eastern Berlin, the capital of East Germany at that time, and moved to Dresden at the age of 20, where he was appointed principal cellist of the world-famous Sächsische Staatskapelle – and was suddenly leading musicians who in some cases were twice his age. Vogler worked "like crazy," he recalls, playing in the orchestra, taking on solo parts, and teaching at the university. But he increasingly considered the routine of fixed programming to be boring. "No one asks an orchestra musician what they think about music," says Vogler, who is always thinking about that – about his music.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of Germany, he decided to take a sabbatical year, tried his hand as a soloist in the US, and gave up his permanent job at the age of 30. It was in the US that he met his wife, violinist Mira Wang.

The couple had two children. And in the mid-2000s, the family permanently moved from Dresden to New York City, marking the beginning of Vogler's global career as a solo artist. Dresden's cultural scene is thankful that Vogler, despite residing primarily in the US, has been returning to his former home for the Musikfestspiele since 2008, where he still owns an apartment today. "I'm more of an adventurer," says Vogler, who likes to try new things, provide inspiration, and realize innovative ideas.

He has performed on the world's greatest stages, released more than 40 albums, received the European

Culture Award, and worked with just about every major conductor and orchestra, including Sir Antonio Pappano, Kent Nagano, Fabio Luisi, and Omer Meir Wellber, as well as the London and New York Philharmonic orchestras and the Gewandhausorchester, at Carnegie Hall and the Semperoper. Many composers have dedicated their works to him.

The New York Times has praised his "lyric sense," *Gramophone* magazine his "spiraling virtuosity," and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* his abilty to "make the cello sing like a voice." Vogler recently achieved viral success: His recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 has been used in around 400,000 Instagram reels so far in Bach Year 2025 – that's more often than many songs by pop stars like Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran. He's not surprised that his over-300-year-old Stradivari cello works well on social media, suggesting that no other instrument has such an "intimate bond between sound and expression, sorrow and joy." The cello, he says, can tap into human emotions with greater precision than the violin or piano. Bowing technique, finger placement, cello notation: Neurological studies have even examined how many synapses would need to be activated to generate a single beautiful tone on the cello. "Five million connections," says Vogler. That's precisely what his art represents.

Pushing the boundaries

A typical day for Vogler begins at seven o'clock in the morning with a cup of coffee and two hours of cello practice, which are then followed by phone calls, organizational tasks, and meetings. He plays cello for another two hours in the afternoon, performs concerts in the evening, and then often gets together with the other musicians. Stress? Not at all, he says.

Vogler smoothly navigates his silent Taycan through Dresden. A topic he often thinks about comes up in conversation during the drive: How do you reach more people with classical music? How do you encourage people to actively attend concerts?

"My job is to speak to the entire population," he says. Under his leadership, the Dresdner Musikfestspiele has evolved into a first-class festival over the years. Having expanded beyond classical music long ago, the program now also features pop, jazz, and world music. He shares an anecdote about Eric Clapton, who came to one of his concerts in London years ago. The two of them met backstage, and Vogler invited the British rock-and-blues star to Dresden. "But he had one condition," recalls the cellist. "He said, 'I'll only come if we play together.'" Vogler delved deep into rock and blues, and the joint concert in 2019 was a huge success. Not least because 3,000 people came who had never been to the Musikfestspiele before. It was a similar situation with Sting and Hollywood icon Bill Murray (*Ghostbusters* , *Lost in Translation*), with whom Vogler is now friends.

We drive past the Grand Garden Palace, Frauenkirche, and Kulturpalast – the festival's magnificent venues. Vogler talks about his next project with Bill Murray, another European tour that will kick off a week after the festival. Their program, which they performed here in Dresden for the first time in 2017, brings together music and literature.

One of them plays Bach and Beethoven, while the other sings, dances, and recites the poems of authors like Walt Whitman and Ernest Hemingway. The concerts sold out long ago – this blend of music and poetry is a huge hit with the audience. Vogler took a similar mix to the stage last year with US lyricist Amanda Gorman.

Murray and Vogler met on a flight to New York City in 2013. Surprisingly, it was the notoriously shy actor who spoke to the cellist out of curiosity. How do you transport such a large instrument on an airplane? Vogler told him that he always books an additional seat for his cello. Murray was impressed. He came to the Dresden festival later that same year – and was familiar with the recordings of all six Bach suites.

That was followed by visits to Murray's home, where the two of them watched Murray's favorite sport, baseball, even though Vogler knew next to nothing about it. "The basis of our friendship is mutual interest," says the musician during the joint concerts. He praises the musicality of his stage companion. The Hollywood star has a lot of respect for classical music and Vogler's extraordinary career, which is always pushing the boundaries between East and West, literature and music, classical and pop. In this regard, the master cellist has achieved perfection.

Info

Text first published in the Porsche magazine Christophorus, issue 416.

Text: Thilo Komma-Pöllath
Photos: Julia Sellmann

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Sandro Kälin

Head of Communications Porsche Schweiz AG
+41 41 487 91 16
sandro.kaelin@porsche.ch



Siraya Schäfer

Press and Public Relations Specialist, Porsche Schweiz AG
+41 41 487 91 47
siraya.schaefer@porsche.ch

Consumption data

Taycan 4 Cross Turismo (WLTP)*: Consommation électrique combinée (gamme): 21.4 – 18.7 kWh/100 km; Emissions de CO_2 combinée (gamme): 0 g/km; Statut [StandHeute]

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart