



## Esa-Pekka Salonen – long bio

(1284 words)

Esa-Pekka Salonen's restless innovation drives him constantly to reposition classical music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He is currently the Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor for London's Philharmonia Orchestra and the Conductor Laureate for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009. This is his final of three seasons as the Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence at the New York Philharmonic and his second of five as Artist in Association at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, where he will conduct his first full *Ring* cycle in future seasons. Additionally, Salonen is Artistic Director and cofounder of the annual Baltic Sea Festival, now in its fifteenth year, which invites celebrated artists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea. He serves as an advisor to the Sync Project, a global initiative to harness the power of music for human health.

Salonen's works move freely between contemporary idioms, combining intricacy and technical virtuosity with playful rhythmic and melodic innovations. Of the premiere of his Cello Concerto for Yo-Yo Ma with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in spring 2016, one critic wrote, "Language can't fully capture the glorious range and complexity of this concerto." The New York Philharmonic went on to perform the cello concerto at home and on their European tour as part of Salonen's Composer-in-Residency, which this year will feature the New York Premiere of his *Gambit* and the New York Concert Premiere of *Helix*. The Los Angeles Philharmonic performs all of Salonen's concertos in February 2018, with Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Yefim Bronfman, and violinist Leila Josefowicz – the musicians for whom the works were written. The Violin Concerto won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award and was featured in a 2014 international Apple ad campaign for iPad. This season it will be choreographed by Saburo Teshigawara at the Paris Opera Ballet, with Salonen conducting some of the performances.

The Barbican Centre in London has a season-long focus on Salonen's music, including performances of *LA Variations* for orchestra; *Dichotomie* for piano; *Two Songs from Kalender Röd* for chorus; *Dona Nobis Pacem* for female chorus; *Iri da iri* for chorus; *Gambit* for orchestra; *Wing on Wing*, written for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's inaugural season at the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall and including recordings of Southern California's plainfin midshipman fish and distorted samples of Mr. Gehry's voice; *Mimo II* for oboe; the UK premiere of *Karawane* for orchestra and chorus, which he wrote as the first-ever Creative Chair at the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich; *Concert etude* for horn, and the European Premiere of a new work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Salonen's compositions will also be featured at the Helsinki Festival and Carnegie Hall and played by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, under Salonen's baton; the Kansas City and Nashville symphonies; the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, which gives the Canadian Premiere of *Insomnia*, and by a joint orchestra of Sibelius Academy and Juilliard School students who, under Salonen's direction, perform *Mania* for cello and orchestra. The Tero Saarinen Dance Company and Royal and Boston ballets will perform pieces choreographed to two additional Salonen orchestral works – *Foreign Bodies* and *Nyx*, respectively.

As he enters his tenth year as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen leads Mahler's third and ninth symphonies, a celebration of 100 years of Finnish independence, the European premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Le Chant des Enfants des Etoiles*, and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. Salonen and the Philharmonia have experimented in groundbreaking ways to present music, with the first major virtual-reality production from a UK symphony orchestra; the award-winning *RE-RITE* and *Universe of Sound* installations, which have allowed people all over the world to conduct, play, and step inside the orchestra through audio and video projections, and the much-hailed app for iPad, *The Orchestra*, which allows the user unprecedented access to the internal workings of eight symphonic works. In 2015 he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education.

As the Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for seventeen years, Salonen is widely credited with revitalizing the organization. He was instrumental in helping the orchestra to open the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, presided over countless premieres of contemporary work, began the Esa-Pekka



Salonen Commissions Fund, and made the orchestra one of the best attended and funded in the country.

Other conducting highlights this season include directing Peter Sellars' production of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms* at his own Baltic Sea Festival, the premiere of Hillborg's *Aeterna* at the same festival, and Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* at the Paris Opera, in addition to several weeks at the Los Angeles and New York philharmonics and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career. An album of Henri Dutilleux's *Correspondances*, recorded with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in the presence of the composer, was released in 2013 by Deutsche Grammophon on the composer's 97<sup>th</sup> birthday. Also that year, Sony completed a project that began with Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic nearly 30 years ago: a two-disc set of the orchestral works of Lutosławski, released in what would have been the composer's 100<sup>th</sup> year. In 2012 he recorded a disc of Saariaho's *La Passion de Simone* with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Dawn Upshaw. Deutsche Grammophon has also released a portrait CD of Salonen's orchestral works performed by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and conducted by the composer, as well as a CD with Salonen's Piano Concerto and his works *Helix* and *Dichotomie*. The latter, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Yefim Bronfman, was nominated for a Grammy in 2009. A CD of five of his orchestral works is available on Sony. 2012 saw the release of his recording of Shostakovich's previously undiscovered opera prologue, *Orango*, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In 2009 a new collaboration with the Philharmonia Orchestra's partner label, Signum, was launched with the release of a live recording of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*; other recent recordings with the Philharmonia on Signum include Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and Mahler's sixth and ninth symphonies. Salonen's 2008 recording of Schoenberg's Violin Concerto and Sibelius' Violin Concerto with Hilary Hahn and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra won a Grammy Award. Other recordings include a DVD of Kaija Saariaho's opera *L'Amour de loin*, with the Finnish National Opera, as well as two CDs with Héléne Grimaud, featuring works by Pärt and Schumann. The first CD recorded at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Salonen's recording of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was nominated for a Grammy in 2007.

Salonen is the recipient of many major awards, including the UNESCO Rostrum Prize for his work *Floof* in 1992 and the Siena Prize, given by the Accademia Chigiana in 1993; he is the first conductor to receive it. In 1995 he received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Opera Award and two years later, its Conductor Award. Salonen was awarded the Litteris et Artibus medal, one of Sweden's highest honors, by the King of Sweden in 1996. In 1998 the French government awarded him the rank of Officier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Salonen was also honored with the Pro Finlandia Medal of the Order of the Lion of Finland and the Helsinki Medal. Most recently he was honored with the 2014 Nemmers Composition Prize, which includes a residency at the Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University and performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. To date, Salonen has received seven honorary doctorates in four different countries. *Musical America* named him its Musician of the Year in 2006, and he was elected an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010.

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