

Esa-Pekka Salonen – long bio (1067 words)

Esa-Pekka Salonen's restless innovation drives him constantly to reposition classical music in the 21st century. He is known as both a composer and conductor and is currently the Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor for London's Philharmonia Orchestra as well as the Conductor Laureate for both the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009. He is the Music Director Designate of the San Francisco Symphony; the

2020-21 season will be his first as Music Director. He is Artist in Association at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet where he will conduct his first full *Ring* cycle in future seasons and *Pelléas et Mélisande* this season. Salonen co-founded—and from 2003 until 2018, served as the Artistic Director for—the annual Baltic Sea Festival, which invites celebrated artists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea.

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 compositions. In 2015 he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education.

In 2018-19 Salonen takes the Philharmonia Orchestra on tour across Europe, the United States, and Asia. Salonen will also direct a new Ivo Van Hove production of Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in summer 2019. In January 2019, Salonen conducts a series of concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, his first as Music Director Designate.

The breadth of Salonen's compositions is on display this season, from playful early pieces to the full rhythmic and melodic complexity of his latest, *Pollux*. Salonen works performed around the world in 2018-19 include *Homunculus* for string quartet, *Pentatonic Étude* for viola, *Memoria* for wind quintet, *Five Images after Sappho* for soprano and chamber ensemble, and major orchestral works: *Helix* at the Minnesota Orchestra and Oslo Philharmonic, *Nyx* at the Colburn Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony, *LA Variations* at the LA Phil, the cello concerto with the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and the violin concerto at the St. Louis, Houston, and Gothenburg symphonies. The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus sings Salonen's *Dona Nobis Pacem*, while the Santa Cruz Symphony closes their season with his *Karawane* for chorus and orchestra alongside Beethoven's Mass in C Major. Salonen

wrote *Karawane*, based on a Dadaist poem by Hugo Ball, during his time as the first-ever composer-in-residence at Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra, and it was featured last year in *Tunnel Visions: Array*, a light-and-sound installation in London's Beech Street Tunnel put on as part of a citywide program for cultural renewal of public spaces.

Salonen conducts his own *Pollux* at the Helsinki Festival and Maggio Fiorentino, and his cello concerto at the Baltic Sea Festival and on tour with the Philharmonia with Truls Mørk as soloist. Both the New York Philharmonic and the Barbican Centre shaped their last seasons around Salonen's music as part of his composer-in-residency in New York and the venue's season-long Salonen focus in London. His violin concerto won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award and was featured in a 2014 international Apple ad campaign for iPad.

As 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 Walt Disney Concert Hall; presided over countless premieres of contemporary works; began the Esa-Pekka Salonen Commissions Fund, and made the orchestra one of the best-attended and funded in the country. This season he brings a series that he created at the Philharmonia to the LA Phil, presenting programs of Stravinsky's "Myths," "Rituals," and "Faith." He also conducts the premiere of Louis Andriessen's *The only one*.

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 97th birthday. Also that year, Sony completed a project that began with Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic nearly 30 years before: a two-disc set of the orchestral works of Witold Lutosławski, released in what would have been the composer's 100th year. An album of five of his orchestral works is available on Sony. Deutsche Grammophon has 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*. In 2018, Pentatone Music released Salonen's take on Stravinsky's *Persephone*, featuring Andrew Staples, Pauline Cheviller, and the Finnish National Opera's chorus, children's chorus and orchestra. Also in 2018, Sony released a box set of all of Salonen's recordings for them—a grand total of 61 discs. In 2019, Salonen will release a recording of his cello concerto.

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 included 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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