

Esa-Pekka Salonen
Long Bio (901 Words)
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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 Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, as well as the Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor for London's Philharmonia Orchestra. He is the Conductor Laureate for both the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009. As a member of the faculty of LA's Colburn School, he develops, leads, and directs the pre-professional Negaunee Conducting Program. 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.

The 2020-21 season is Salonen's first as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony; it is also his final season as Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra. As a conductor and leader, he has become known for his groundbreaking approach to presenting and performing music, joining cutting-edge technological innovation with adventurous curation and meticulous performance. His past projects have included the Philharmonia's *Virtual Orchestra*, 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. As Artist in Association with the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, he has recently launched the interactive AI opera installation *Laila*; in 2015 he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education.

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 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. Maintaining his close ties with the Los Angeles musical community, Salonen currently serves on the faculty of the Colburn School, and is a frequent and celebrated guest of both the Philharmonic and the Colburn Orchestra.

Salonen is known for his inventive and cerebral compositions, ranging from playful early works such as UNESCO Rostrum Prize-winning *Floof* to the Grawemeyer Award-winning violin concerto and recently-recorded cello concerto. This season's programmed compositions include *Gemini*, to be performed by the San Francisco Symphony, and *Fog*, which had its Finnish premiere with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. *Nyx* appears with the hr-Sinfonieorchester and organist Iveta Apkalna, while violist Lawrence Power performs the new piece *Objets Trouvés*; Power, for whom it was written, premiered the piece at the 2020

Edinburgh International Festival. The recent work *Laila*, an AI opera installation for the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, embraces the restrictions of the coronavirus age through a personalized and socially-distant performance.

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. 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 Chevallier, 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, Sony released a recording of Salonen's Cello Concerto, performed by Yo-Yo Ma and the LA Phil.

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. In addition to receiving both the Pro Finlandia Medal of the Order of the Lion of Finland and the Helsinki Medal, he was named Commander, First Class of the Order of the Lion of Finland by the President of Finland. 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. He was the recipient of 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.