

philharmonia orchestra

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES SALONEN APPOINTMENT

The Philharmonia Orchestra confirmed today that Esa-Pekka Salonen will succeed Christoph von Dohnányi as Principal Conductor. Salonen will take up the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia from the beginning of the 2008/9 season.

Planning already in place for 2008/09 leaves the Orchestra confident that Salonen's appointment opens up new artistic horizons, both for the Philharmonia and for its partners. Salonen has previously collaborated with the Orchestra on a range of pioneering projects that are still used as benchmarks worldwide, from the award-winning Ligeti project *Clocks and Clouds* to the first ever fully interactive live orchestral audio-visual webcast, mounted by the Philharmonia Orchestra in April 2005.

Esa-Pekka Salonen describes the appointment as a natural development:

"My relationship with the Philharmonia began back in 1983 when I walked onto the Royal Festival Hall platform to conduct Mahler's 3rd Symphony - the support that the orchestra gave me that day was overwhelming and unforgettable. We started a journey together then, building a partnership by performing major projects together based on the music of Ligeti, Lindberg, Lutoslawski and Berio.

The Philharmonia is a unique ensemble. It is flexible, has immense commitment, energy, imagination and a spirit of adventure that I find inspiring and with which I feel at home. I am now very honoured to follow Christoph von Dohnányi in leading this wonderful group of musicians."

The appointment has been warmly welcomed by the Philharmonia Orchestra's current Principal Conductor Christoph von Dohnányi, who has accepted the title of Honorary Conductor for Life from the beginning of the 2008/09 season:

"I am pleased to give my warmest endorsement to Esa-Pekka Salonen's appointment as Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra. I can think of no-one better suited to take over the helm of this great orchestra, and look forward to working closely with him to realise our shared ambitions for the future." Christoph von Dohnányi

David Whelton, Managing Director of the Philharmonia Orchestra, paid tribute to Christoph von Dohnányi, and described the appointment as both a dream and the very best possible succession for the Orchestra:

"I have taken such pleasure in watching Christoph von Dohnányi explore and re-define this orchestra's great Austro-Hungarian roots over the last 10 years. His explorations of the music of Henze, Berio and Birtwistle sit alongside Salonen's Ligeti and Lindberg festivals as the artistic highpoints of the last decade. I know that Christoph has always felt that Salonen would be his natural successor.

On the day that Esa-Pekka Salonen signed his contract, we agreed that the relationship between him and the Philharmonia must be the longest courtship in history. I think it is true to say that the Orchestra has been utterly captivated by him ever since their extraordinary first collaboration in 1983."

Alistair Mackie, Co-Principal Trumpet and Chairman of the Philharmonia Orchestra added:

"Esa-Pekka Salonen is one of those rare conductors that encourages every orchestral player to go to their limits in every single performance. His combination of intelligence, musical integrity and sheer physical presence makes him one of the most exciting conductors to play for: his energy is absolutely irresistible. In Salonen we know that we have found a Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor that shares not only our respect for tradition but our passion for the new."

Partnership and cross-artform collaboration will be key to Salonen's artistic approach. The central focus of his opening season as Principal Conductor in 2008/09 will be the launch of a major project exploring the cultural influences of *fin de siecle* Vienna .

The appointment cements a relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra that dates back more than 20 years. The then 25 year old Esa-Pekka Salonen made his London conducting debut in 1983, stepping in at the last minute for an indisposed Michael Tilson Thomas to conduct a now-legendary performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with the Philharmonia Orchestra. He formed an immediate bond with the players, holding the title of Principal Guest Conductor from 1983-1992.

He returns to London for three concerts from 9-19 December 2006, focusing on Mahler's Song Cycles; all three will be recorded by BBC Radio 3 for future broadcast. On 19 December he will also be the first main evening conductor to programme and lead one of the Orchestra's free pre-concert Music of Today performances, which includes one of his own chamber works, *Memoria*, as well as works by Lutoslawski, Castiglioni and Donatoni.

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