

# philharmonia orchestra

## ESA-PEKKA SALONEN

### Conductor

Born in Helsinki, Esa-Pekka Salonen studied at the Sibelius Academy and made his conducting début with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 1979. In 1985 he was appointed Chief Conductor of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, where he remained for 10 years, and also in 1985 took up the post of Principal Guest Conductor of The Philharmonia, which he held until 1994. He was Director of the Helsinki Festival in 1995 and 1996. Esa-Pekka Salonen is currently Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, a position that he will hold until summer 2009. From the beginning of the 2008/9 season, Salonen will take up the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London.

In November 2007, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic can be heard in Europe on a tour that will take them to London, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona and Lisbon. The program will focus on Sibelius, honoring the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the composer's death, and also present works by Salonen, Saariaho and Stucky.

Esa-Pekka Salonen's recent and forthcoming conducting engagements include appearances with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. With the Philharmonia Orchestra, Salonen will perform several concerts in the UK in February 2008.

Salonen has been Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic since 1992. Highlights include residencies at the Salzburg Festival, Köln Philharmonie and at the Théâtre du Châtelet as well as numerous European tours and guest performances in Japan. In Los Angeles, major projects include a semi-staged production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, directed by Peter Sellars, with video artist Bill Viola produced as a co-production with the Paris National Opera and a festival focusing on music composed by Esa-Pekka Salonen, presented in honour of the 20th anniversary of his début with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Salonen is the recipient of many major awards including the Siena Prize by the Accademia Chigiana in 1993, the first conductor ever to receive the prize; in 1995 he was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Opera Award and in 1997 received their Conductor Award. In 1998 he was awarded the rank of Officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government. In May 2003 he received an honorary doctorate from the Sibelius Academy in Finland and in 2005 the Helsinki Medal of the city. Musical America named Salonen in December 2005 as its "Musician of the Year 2006".

Esa-Pekka Salonen is renowned for his interpretations of contemporary music and has given countless premieres of new works. He has led critically acclaimed festivals of music by Berlioz, Ligeti, Schönberg, Shostakovich, and Stravinsky and Magnus Lindberg. In April 2006 he returned to Opéra Bastille to conduct the premiere of Kaija Saariaho's new opera, *Adriana Mater*, after having conducted the Finnish premiere of her first opera *L'amour de loin* in 2004. In August 2007, he conducted Saariaho's *La Passion de Simone* in a production by Peter Sellars at the Helsinki Festival (first Finnish performance) and then took the production to Stockholm, to the Baltic Sea Festival.

Salonen is artistic director of the Baltic Sea Festival, that he co-initiated in 2003. An annual event in August in Stockholm and across the Baltic Sea region it invites celebrated orchestras, conductors and soloists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea.

In 2003 Esa-Pekka Salonen signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. Releases with Deutsche Grammophon so far include a disc of Salonen works performed with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and a DVD of Kaija Saariaho's opera, *L'Amour de loin* with the Finnish National Opera as well as two CDs with Héléne Grimaud with works by Pärt and Schumann. The first recording of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Salonen for Deutsche Grammophon (*Stravinsky's Rite of Spring* - first CD recording ever at Walt Disney Concert Hall) was released in October 2006. After recording for Sony Classical for many years, Salonen has an extensive discography with repertoire ranging from Mahler and Revueltas to Magnus Lindberg and his own works.

### **Composer**

Esa-Pekka Salonen (born Finland 1958) studied horn, composing and conducting at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki during the 1970s and composing with Niccolò Castiglioni and Franco Donatoni in Italy. He initially considered himself to be a conducting composer, until in 1983 he undertook a performance of Mahler's third symphony with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London at short notice and became a composing conductor virtually overnight.

Some twenty years later, alongside his international conducting career, Salonen has preserved his individual voice as a composer and each new work is eagerly awaited. His orchestral works are regularly performed and broadcast all around the world, and *Floof* and *LA Variations* have become established as modern classics. Two major retrospectives of his work - in Helsinki in March 2003 at *Musica Nova* and in Stockholm in October 2004 at the Stockholm International Composer Festival - have been presented to huge audiences and critical acclaim. A CD of five orchestral works is available on the Sony label (SK89158). Deutsche Grammophon, with whom Salonen has an exclusive recording contract, has released a portrait CD of his orchestral works performed by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer (CD 477 5375).

Salonen's first large scale orchestral work *Concerto for saxophone and orchestra* ('...auf den ersten blick und ohne zu wissen...') dates from 1980-81, when Salonen was studying in Milan with Niccolò Castiglioni. This was followed by *Giro*, which uses something of the same harmonic structure, and *Floof*, an experimental piece setting texts by the Polish science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem. This ebullient and histrionic tour de force for soprano and small ensemble won the UNESCO Rostrum prize in 1992 and has been widely performed and broadcast in Europe and the USA.

Ten years were to pass before Salonen had the time to complete another large-scale piece, although he did continue to work on a series of solo works entitled *Yta* (surface), and a pair of virtuoso duos entitled *Meeting* and *Second Meeting*, the latter forming the basis for *Mimo II* for oboe and small orchestra, written in 1992.

It was in 1996 that Salonen took time out from his conducting schedule to compose a major orchestral piece, *LA Variations*, which was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he has been Music Director since 1992. The piece had a triumphant premiere in January 1997, and has since proved to be one of the most popular orchestral works of recent decades. *LA Variations* marked the start of a newly fertile composing life. In June 1997 Salonen made extensive revisions to *Giro*; the new version was premiered at the *Avanti! Summer Sounds Festival* in Finland. Another orchestral work, *Gambit*, was composed in 1998 as a 40th birthday present for his compatriot and great friend Magnus Lindberg; this was followed a year later by *Five Images After Sappho*, a song-

cycle for soprano and ensemble co-commissioned by the Ojai Festival, California and the London Sinfonietta.

In order to devote more time to composition, Salonen took a year's sabbatical from conducting in 2000, during which time he composed the Concert Etude for solo horn, Dichotomie for solo piano, the cello concerto Mania for Anssi Karttunen and London Sinfonietta, and his first choral work - Two Songs to Poems of Ann Jäderlund for the Swedish Radio Choir.

The virtuosic Stockholm Diary for string orchestra was commissioned by the Stockholm Concert Hall Foundation for the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and Stockholm Chamber Orchestra to mark the occasion of Esa-Pekka Salonen's Composer Portrait at the Konserthuset in Stockholm October 2004.

Since his sabbatical Salonen has completed further works for symphony orchestra - Foreign Bodies (2001), commissioned by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Insomnia (2002), co-commissioned by Suntory Hall, Tokyo and Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg, Wing on Wing (2004), which received its world premiere at Walt Disney Concert Hall in June 2004, and was a gift from the composer to the Los Angeles Philharmonic in honour of their new home, and Helix (2005), which was commissioned by the BBC Proms. In February 2007 Salonen conducted the New York Philharmonic in the first performance of his first piano concerto, dedicated to Yefim Bronfman who also premiered it. This concerto was co-commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the BBC, Radio France and NDR Hamburg, the first European performance took place at the BBC Proms in London in July 2007.