

## MARCH VIDEO PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

### **Emily Davis, Second Violin, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

Welcome to the Philharmonia Orchestra's March podcast. This month, we've got an exclusive interview with Esa-Pekka Salonen who becomes our principal conductor and artistic advisor in September.

But first, I spoke to the players in the Philharmonia to find out why there's a buzz backstage.

### **Pete Fry, Percussionist, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

I'm greatly looking forward to Esa-Pekka coming to the orchestra. I think it's fantastic news. It's really exciting. He's a young, vibrant, exciting conductor. He's just what we need really.

### **Clare Thompson, No. 3 First Violin, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

With Esa-Pekka, he is just a really terrific musician.

### **Christian Jones, Principal Bass Trombone, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

I like the energy that Esa-Pekka has. He's absolutely brilliant to work with.

### **Clare Thompson:**

When he conducts the orchestra he does it in such a way that he controls every single corner of the orchestra and you absolutely know where you fit in.

### **Sam Burstin, Viola, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

I just think the orchestra's so lucky to have managed to get a conductor of his calibre.

### **Tim Jackson, Third Horn, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

I'm very excited about that. I think he's a wonderful conductor, he's a good musician and he's very inspiring for the orchestra.

### **Kevin Hathway, Percussionist, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

He really is a percussionist's delight simply because his style of repertoire suits us perfectly.

### **David Cohen, Joint Principal Cello, Philharmonia Orchestra:**

Very exciting, new programmes, probably more around 20<sup>th</sup> century music which suits me best. I always like a good challenge.

### **Sam Burstin:**

He's just got the whole package as a conductor as far as I'm concerned. His musicality is wonderful, he's great fun to work with, and he gets the best out of the orchestra. Just top drawer. So it's going to be great.

**Emily Davis:**

For me the most exciting thing about working with Esa-Pekka is his fresh, dynamic approach as well as the chance to perform some more contemporary repertoire.

We spoke to Maestro Salonen about what he's looking forward to.

**Esa-Pekka Salonen, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra from September 2008:**

It's a difficult city, let's face it. Traffic is awful, it's so full of people, and it's expensive and dirty and the Tube doesn't work and the trains are crap, and there's all that. But at the same time it's endlessly fascinating.

I think London is completely amazing at the moment. I'm always sure that the depth and volume of London arts life and more specifically musical life is unlike any other place on the earth. The fact that there are so many orchestras competing and there's so much going on is sometimes trouble, but mostly it's inspiring because it really forces us to think of new solutions and think of something that really has an identity.

What I'm really hoping to be able to do, apart from the purely musical things, i.e. doing fascinating things with the Philharmonia, I'm really hoping to be able to connect with the arts life and be able to tap into the amazing variety and volume of arts in London, This is something, that kind of arts scene that exists in London, that's something I've been missing actually.

Well if I somehow had to describe myself as a musician in one word, I think 'curious' would be the word. Endlessly fascinated by music. Why is this piece a masterpiece and why is that piece not a masterpiece, why has a melody like *Greensleeves* survived for hundreds and hundreds of years and several hundreds of thousands melodies haven't, what is it? And I think it's that journey I'm on still.

It is usually quite difficult to listen to classical music and trying to relax. To clear my head after a concert I've conducted I knock off a couple of whiskies then listen to some rock music really loudly in my car – like *Foo Fighters*, *Radiohead*, *Bjork*, that sort of thing.

**Interviewer:**

Did you download the most recent *Radiohead* album?

**Esa-Pekka Salonen:**

Yes I did, in fact. They're certainly very interesting and the kind of innovation that goes into that music is not very alien to what we try to do on our side. I went to the website and I was hit by this moral feeling that these people are colleagues on some level. They're richer but colleagues nevertheless! So I'm not going to download it for free. So I paid twelve pounds I think which is more or less the price for a normal CD in the UK at the moment or something like that maybe. So I feel very good about myself!

One of the many amazing things about The Philharmonia of course is the flexibility. The almost uncanny ability to identify with whatever music they're playing. A historically informed

Beethoven sound; they can go from that to the lush sounds of Messiaen just like that and there are not many orchestras that can do that. There seems to be an intuitive, very natural understanding between myself and the players. The kind of change of gear between a dress rehearsal and a concert is amazing because the Philharmonia really is a sort of concert animal. That is the whole point of playing music for people. That you do absolutely 120% every time you do anything otherwise it makes no sense. Why are we doing it otherwise? And that's also what makes a live performance worthwhile because this is something you will not get from a recording.

**Interviewer:**

Do you remember how you felt during that first concert with the Philharmonia?

**Esa-Pekka Salonen:**

Already kind of impressed with the way they played, at the dress rehearsal the sheer quality of the playing and the sound they made; but then when the concert started and they started putting out, I was beside myself: I thought, "Yeah, this is it, this is fun!"

**Emily Davis:**

Esa-Pekka Salonen will take up his position as Principal Conductor and Artistic advisor to the Philharmonia Orchestra from September 2008.

Booking is now open for the first half of the 2008-9 season of concerts. You can download the full season brochure online, and book tickets by calling Freephone 0800 652 6717.

March sees a wide range of concerts, including Philippe Jordan conducting Mahler's Fifth Symphony in London and two concerts with violinist Nicola Benedetti in London and Bedford.

The orchestra is also performing a series of concerts with the Finnish conductor Mikko Franck, including Mahler's 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony. The programme for these concerts also features Viviane Hagner playing the Prokofiev Violin Concerto in Bristol and Gianluca Cascioli performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in Leicester and London.

Next month sees a series of concerts with the tenor Alfie Boe, as the Philharmonia celebrates some of the finest arias in Opera! We spoke to Alfie here at ENO where he is preparing for his role in their new production of *The Merry Widow*.

**Alfie Boe, Tenor:**

I personally like to have the orchestra with me on stage because it makes you feel a part of the orchestra and part of the group. Because you are just an instrument as well on that stage and everybody one that stage has an important job to do. The fact that I'm just singing the song is just another aspect of the music.

I think you should really do the songs in the same way as you would on stage; feel the role, feel what you're saying. The basic thing is understanding what you're talking about. If you believe what you're talking about then it's going to come across very well.

Some actors say become the character. You can't really become the character you can feel the character, you can try and relate to what they're feeling. That's what I try to do as a singer; to try to relate to how they would be feeling in that instant.

Hopefully you have a bit of space between each song to go off stage, get your thoughts, get your feeling and know where you're coming from but other times you have to really quickly change to the next scene, the next story, the next character or the next thing you're singing about.

One of the arias I'm going to be singing is the Italian tenor aria from *Der Rosenkavalier*. The Italian tenor dramatically walks onto the stage and sings this mighty, fantastic Italian aria. The actual opera is in German but he walks on and sings this glorious aria and brings the house down basically! So hopefully I'll have that same response!

I'd like to eventually get to the bigger roles like Radames in *Aida* and Cavaradossi in *Tosca*; things like that, it'd be beautiful to sing that repertoire. It's something that I grew up listening to and you always get the warning as a young tenor to not do that too soon, to not jump the gun, to be patient.

It can be a bit of a roller-coaster but every roller-coaster has its dips and its climbs but I'm just taking the ride as it comes along and it is a long way from where I came from but I'm taking every day as it comes and every challenge.

**Emily Davis:**

Thanks for joining me this month, and we look forward to seeing you soon.