

# philharmonia orchestra

## PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

### *Full biography*

The Philharmonia Orchestra is a world-class symphony orchestra for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Led by its Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia has a pioneering approach to the role of the modern-day symphony orchestra, reaching new audiences and participants through audience development, digital technology and learning and participation programmes. Based in London, but with residencies in cities throughout England and a thriving international touring programme and global digital reach, the Philharmonia engages with a world-wide audience.

The Orchestra's home is Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in the heart of London, where the Philharmonia has been resident since 1995 and presents a Season of over 50 performances each year. Orchestral programming is complemented by series including *Philharmonia at the Movies*, *Music of Today*, the Philharmonia Chamber Players and an *Insights Talks* programme.

Under Salonen and other key conductors, the Philharmonia has created a series of critically-acclaimed, visionary projects at the Festival Hall – distinctive for both their artistic scope and supporting live and digital content. Bill Viola's *Tristan und Isolde* (2010); *Infernal Dance: Inside the World of Béla Bartók* (2011); and *City of Light: Paris 1900-1950* (2015), were followed in 2016 by the major, five-concert series *Stravinsky: Myths & Rituals*, which won a South Bank Sky Arts Award. In 2017/18, Vladimir Ashkenazy leads a focus on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet Revolution in *Voices of Revolution: Russia 1917*.

The Orchestra is committed to presenting the same quality of live music in venues throughout the UK as it does in London, especially at its residencies: at Bedford's Corn Exchange, De Montfort Hall in Leicester, the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury, The Anvil in Basingstoke (where it is Orchestra in Partnership), Three Choirs Festival, and Garsington Opera. At the heart of the UK residencies is a programme delivered by the Philharmonia Education team that empowers people in every community to engage and participate in orchestral music.

Key Stage 2 schools concerts, *Orchestra Unwrapped*, are delivered in partnership with Music Hub partners; intergenerational creative music-making community project *Hear and Now* brings together people with dementia and their carers with young musicians; and ground-breaking urban-classical project *Symphonize* engages vulnerable teenagers. In Leicester, a major partnership with De Montfort University brings a wealth of opportunities for students.

Internationally, the Philharmonia is active across Europe, Asia and the USA. With Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Orchestra has recently undertaken major tours to Taiwan and Japan (spring 2017), West-Coast USA (autumn 2016) and a residency at Festival d'Aix en Provence in summer 2016.

A five-concert European tour with Salonen and Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto, in September 2017, will see the Philharmonia perform for the first time at the new Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg.

As one of the world's most recorded orchestras, the Philharmonia's international recognition and reputation in part derives from its extraordinary recording legacy, which in the last 10 years has been burnished by digital and technological innovation. The Orchestra now records and releases music across multiple channels and media. An app for iPad, *The Orchestra*, has sold tens of thousands of copies. Film composers including Marvel films composer Brian Tyler choose to record their Hollywood scores with the Orchestra. The Philharmonia is Classic FM's 'Orchestra on Tour' and broadcasts extensively on BBC Radio 3; with Signum Records the Philharmonia releases live recordings of signature concerts; and the Orchestra's *YouTube* channel has nearly 50,000 subscribers.

More recently the Philharmonia and Salonen have forged a new path with Virtual Reality. *360 Experience*, produced with 3D audio and video, has been presented at Southbank Centre and at the Ravinia (Chicago) and Cheltenham Festivals. An extended version of the experience was released on the *PlayStation VR* platform earlier in 2017, and this new 15-minute version will again be presented free at the Festival Hall in September 2017.

The Philharmonia's investment in technological innovation has been a catalyst for its award-winning audience development projects, which are united behind the concept of taking symphonic music out of the concert hall presenting it in new contexts. Two giant audio-visual walk-through installations, *RE-RITE* (2010, based on Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*) and *Universe of Sound: The Planets* (2012), have toured nationally and internationally following London premieres. Both installations were at the heart of a major two-year audience development and education initiative, *iOrchestra* (2014-15), which took place in South-West England and engaged over 120,000 people.

In September 2016, in partnership with Southbank Centre, the Orchestra presented *The Virtual Orchestra*, a free two-week series in the public spaces of Royal Festival Hall. The project brought together the Orchestra's installations (*Universe of Sound*), VR presentation, a high-impact participation programme and a specially programmed live concert. The Orchestra has won four Royal Philharmonic Society awards for its digital projects and audience engagement work.

The Philharmonia was founded in 1945 by EMI producer Walter Legge. It has been self-governing since 1964 and is owned by its 80 members. During its first seven decades, the Orchestra collaborated with most of the great classical artists of the 20th century. Conductors associated with the Orchestra include Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names associated with the Orchestra include Lorin Maazel, Sir Charles Mackerras, Riccardo Muti and Kurt Sanderling.

Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has been Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor of the Orchestra since 2008. Jakub Hrůša and Santtu-Matias Rouvali are Principal Guest Conductors and honorary conductor positions are held by Christoph von Dohnányi and Vladimir Ashkenazy. Composer Unsuk Chin is Artistic Director of the Orchestra's new music series, *Music of Today*.

An Emerging Artists strand aims to develop the next generation of composers and instrumentalists.

The Philharmonia's Composers' Academy champions three developing composers each year; the Philharmonia MMSF Instrumental Fellowship Programme supports instrumentalists seeking an orchestral career and connects them to the wider life of the Philharmonia and the expertise within its membership.

The Philharmonia is proud to be an Arts Council England-funded organisation. A charity, the Orchestra relies on individual and corporate generosity to deliver its programme.

*The Philharmonia's Principal International Partner is Wuliangye.*

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**2017/18 Season biography.**