

Esa-Pekka Salonen  
2021-22 Short Bio (612 Words)

Esa-Pekka Salonen is known as both a composer and conductor. He is currently the Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. He is the Conductor Laureate for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009, the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he was Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor from 2008 until 2021, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. 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.

Salonen is known for his enthusiastic adoption of emerging technology. His projects have included the Philharmonia's *Virtual Orchestra*, the award-winning *RE-RITE* and *Universe of Sound* immersive installations, and the much-hailed app for iPad, *The Orchestra*. In 2015 he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education, and in 2020, his interactive AI opera installation *Laila*, presented with the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, was awarded the Fedora Digital Prize.

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, he is a frequent and celebrated guest of both the Philharmonic and the Colburn Orchestra.

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career, both as a conductor and composer. His recent recordings include Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, recorded with Lise Davidsen and the Philharmonia Orchestra; Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* and *Dance Suite*, also with the Philharmonia; Stravinsky's *Persephone*, featuring Andrew Staples, Pauline Chevallier, and the Finnish National Opera, and a 2018 box set of his complete Sony recordings. His compositions appear on releases from Sony, Deutsche Grammophon, and Decca; his Piano Concerto (with Yefim Bronfman), Violin Concerto (with Leila Jofesowicz), and Cello Concerto (with Yo-Yo Ma) all appear on recordings conducted by Salonen himself.

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. His Violin Concerto won the 2012 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. 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. In 2020, he was appointed an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) by the Queen of England. To date, he has received seven honorary doctorates in four different countries.