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SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY MUSIC DIRECTOR ESA-PEKKA SALONEN AWARDED HONORARY KNIGHTHOOD

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (December 21, 2020)—San Francisco Symphony Music Director [Esa-Pekka Salonen](#) has been awarded an honorary KBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his services to music and United Kingdom-Finland relations. Finnish-born conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has strong connections to the UK, where his international debut took place in 1983 when he was first invited to conduct the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. Salonen was the Philharmonia Orchestra’s Principal Guest Conductor from 1985–1994 and has been Principal Conductor there from 2008 through June 2021. Following his tenure in that position, he will become the Philharmonia Orchestra’s Artistic Advisor and Conductor Emeritus.

“This is a true personal honour, but more than that, it is meaningful to have artists honoured at a national—at a historical—level. It shows an appreciation of art-making as a necessary part of society. A recognition that culture is who we are, not just what we do. I am grateful for my time in London and throughout the UK with the Philharmonia Orchestra. I share this with them,” says Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Only a small number of Finns have received British honorary knighthoods. Salonen joins former Presidents Martti Ahtisaari and Urho Kekkonen, Prime Minister of Finland and President of the UN General Assembly Harri Holkeri, former President and Marshal of Finland C. G. E. Mannerheim and former Prime Minister, President and the Governor of the Bank of Finland Risto Ryti.

About Esa-Pekka Salonen

San Francisco Symphony Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen has, through his many high-profile conducting roles and work as a leading composer, shaped a unique vision for the present and future of the contemporary symphony orchestra. Salonen is currently the Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor for London’s Philharmonia Orchestra and is Artist in Association at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet. He is a member of the faculty of the Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he developed and directs the pre-professional Negaunee Conducting Program. Salonen is the Conductor Laureate for both the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009. Salonen co-founded—and from 2003 until 2018 served as the Artistic Director for—the annual Baltic Sea Festival.

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