



Esa-Pekka Salonen

Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony

Esa-Pekka Salonen is known as both a composer and conductor. He is the Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, where he works alongside eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of disciplines, ranging from composers to roboticists. He is the Conductor Laureate for London's Philharmonia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the faculty of Los Angeles'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 of, the annual Baltic Sea Festival.

Since joining the San Francisco Symphony in 2020, Salonen has defined his tenure with an impulse to expand and embrace the possibilities of the orchestra. In addition to an unprecedented leadership model in which he is joined by eight Collaborative Partners—whose diversity of expertise reflects the scope of experience he envisions as the future of classical music and its audience—Salonen has launched a residency-based touring model with an eye to a future of climate-conscious community building; established the California Festival, a two-week, inter-institutional statewide celebration, which he conceived alongside Gustavo Dudamel and Rafael Payare; and led a series of collaborations across disciplines and practices that unite the Symphony's musicians, administration, and facilities staff into a singular engine dedicated to engaging classical music in novel ways.

Beginning with the Opening Night Gala, Salonen will lead the Symphony in twelve weeks of programming in the 2023–24 season. Early season highlights will include world premieres of Jesper Nordin's violin concerto *Convergence*, with Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto, and Anders Hillborg's Piano Concerto, with Emanuel Ax. In November, Salonen will conduct the inaugural California Festival; San Francisco programming will include the world premiere of Jens Ibsen's *Drowned in Light* and the San Francisco premieres of Gabriella Smith's *Breathing Forests* and Salonen's own *kínēma*.

In the spring, Salonen will conduct pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet in performances of Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, featuring a unique take on the composer's color organ; he also curates and conducts a program for the Symphony's SoundBox series. He will then lead an all-Sibelius program both in San Francisco and on tour in Southern California. Salonen closes the Symphony's season with four weeks of programming in June, beginning with a program of

Ravel's *Ma mère l'Oye*, with choreography by Alonzo King LINES Ballet, and Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, in a new staged production by Peter Sellars. Other late-season highlights include the Orchestral Series debut of Sheku Kanneh-Mason; the first San Francisco Symphony performances of Sofia Gubaidulina's *Fairytale Poem*; and a program featuring Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto, with soloist Yefim Bronfman. The season formally concludes with Mahler's Symphony No. 3.

Salonen will also conduct many of his own works this season. In October, he leads the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the world premiere of a short new work composed in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall; he returns to Los Angeles in December to conduct his sprawling, Dada-infused *Karawane*. He also leads his 2023 Sinfonia Concertante for Organ and Orchestra with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra; Olivier Latry will appear as soloist with both orchestras. Other conducting highlights include the Philadelphia Orchestra premiere of his recent piece *kínēma*; an all-Hillborg program with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra; performances in London and Germany with the Philharmonia Orchestra; an extended three-week engagement with Orchestre de Paris; and concerts with the New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony.

Esa-Pekka Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career, both as a conductor and composer. With the San Francisco Symphony, he has released recordings of Bartók's three piano concertos with Pierre-Laurent Aimard on Pentatone, as well as spatial audio recordings of Ligeti's *Clocks and Clouds*, *Lux Aeterna*, and *Ramifications* on Apple Music Classical. Other recent recordings include Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs*, recorded with Lise Davidsen and the Philharmonia Orchestra; Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* and *Dance Suite*, also with the Philharmonia; Stravinsky's *Perséphone*, featuring Andrew Staples, Pauline Cheviller, and the Finnish National Opera; and a 2018 box set of his complete Sony recordings. His compositions appear on releases from the Sony, Deutsche Grammophon, and Decca labels; his Piano Concerto (with Yefim Bronfman), Violin Concerto (with Leila Josefowicz), 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. Also in 2014, he was awarded the Gloria Artis Medal for Merit to Culture by Poland's Minister of Culture. In 2020, he was appointed an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) by Queen Elizabeth II. To date, he has received seven honorary doctorates in four different countries.

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