

philharmonia orchestra

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Full biography

The Philharmonia is a world-class symphony orchestra for the 21st century. Led by its Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia creates thrilling performances in the concert hall and reaches new listeners and participants through audience development projects, digital technology, and a learning and participation programme. Based in London, with residencies throughout England, a thriving international touring schedule and global digital reach, the Philharmonia engages with a worldwide audience.

London Season

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 around 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 programme.

Under Salonen and other key conductors, the Philharmonia has created a series of critically-acclaimed, visionary projects, distinctive for both their artistic scope and supporting live and digital content. Recent series include *City of Light: Paris 1900-1950* (2015) and *Stravinsky: Myths & Rituals* (2016), which won a South Bank Sky Arts Award. In 2019, Salonen presents *Weimar Berlin: Bittersweet Metropolis*, a celebration of the feverish creativity of the Weimar era through the prism of its music, drama and film.

UK programme

The Philharmonia is orchestra-in-residence at venues and festivals across England, and has a diverse UK touring programme that regularly takes the Orchestra to the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International Festival and St David's Hall in Cardiff. The Philharmonia's residencies are at Bedford Corn Exchange, De Montfort Hall in Leicester, The Marlowe in Canterbury, The Anvil in Basingstoke (where it is Orchestra in Partnership), the Three Choirs Festival in the West of England, and Garsington Opera.

At the heart of the Orchestra's residencies is an education programme that empowers people in every community to engage with, and participate in, orchestral music. Its flagship *Orchestra Unwrapped* project for schools encompasses concerts, in-school workshops and teacher training, delivered in partnership with Music Hubs; intergenerational creative music-making community project *Hear and Now* brings together people living with dementia and their carers with young musicians; and urban-classical project *Symphonize* engages vulnerable teenagers.

The Orchestra works with a wide range of higher education institutions across its residencies, including with our Strategic Partner in Leicester, De Montfort University, which brings a wealth of opportunities for students.

Global reach

Internationally, the Philharmonia is active across Europe, Asia and the USA. With Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Orchestra has recently undertaken major tours to Taiwan, Japan and the USA, and a residency at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence in summer 2016, where they will return in 2019. A five-concert European tour with Salonen and Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto, in September 2017, saw the Philharmonia perform for the first time at the new Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg.

In the 2018/19 season the Orchestra performs extensively in Europe and undertakes three major international tours. Salonen leads a tour to China and South Korea in October 2018. The Philharmonia travels to Cartagena, Colombia, in January 2019, in a project that brings together live performances and digital installation *Universe of Sound*. And in March 2019, Salonen leads a US tour that features two performances at Lincoln Center, New York, and visits CAL Performances in Berkeley, California.

Digital programme, recording and broadcasting

The Philharmonia's international reputation in part derives from its extraordinary recording legacy, which in the last 10 years has been built on by its pioneering work with digital technology. Two giant audio-visual walk-through installation experiences, *RE-RITE* (2009, based on Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*) and *Universe of Sound: The Planets* (2012) have introduced hundreds of thousands of people across the world to the symphony orchestra, while more recently, the Philharmonia and Esa-Pekka Salonen have blazed a trail for classical music in Virtual Reality.

VR experiences featuring music by Sibelius, Mahler and Beethoven, placing the viewer at the heart of the orchestra, have been presented at Southbank Centre, at the Ravinia (Chicago), Bergen and Cheltenham Festivals, and at the SXSW Conference and Festival in Austin, Texas. The Orchestra's 2018/19 London Season opens with a new, audio-led VR installation, *VR Sound Stage*, which is presented for free in the foyer of Royal Festival Hall.

The Philharmonia records and releases music across multiple channels and media. An app for iPad, *The Orchestra*, has sold tens of thousands of copies. Composers including Brian Tyler, Steven Price, James Newton Howard and Christopher Lennertz choose to record their scores for films, video games and television series with the Orchestra (recent credits include the new Formula 1 theme, *Lost in Space* (Netflix), *The Mummy* and *Baby Driver*). The Orchestra's VR *360 Experience* is available on PlayStation VR. 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 60,000 subscribers. In October 2017 a live stream of Mahler's Third Symphony, conducted by Salonen was experienced by a worldwide audience.

New audiences

The Philharmonia's investment in technological innovation has been a catalyst for its award-winning audience development projects, which are united by the concept of taking symphonic music out of the concert hall and presenting it in new contexts. The Orchestra has won four Royal Philharmonic Society awards for its digital projects and audience engagement work. *RE-RITE* and *Universe of Sound* 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 its most ambitious audience development project to date, the Philharmonia is presenting *The Virtual Orchestra* – a six-week festival of digital installations, VR, workshops and community engagement, and fringe performances – in each of its residency locations: Bedford, Leicester (2018), Canterbury and Basingstoke (2019).

History and people

The Philharmonia was founded in 1945 by EMI producer Walter Legge, and in its first 30 years worked with a who's who of twentieth century music, especially in the recording studio. Otto Klemperer, Riccardo Muti (the first two of only five Principal Conductors), Herbert von Karajan, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli and Carlo Maria Giulini are just a few of the great artists to be associated with the Philharmonia.

The members of the Philharmonia took over ownership of the orchestra in 1964 (which was known as the New Philharmonia until 1977) and it has been self-governing ever since. Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has been Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor of the Orchestra since 2008. Jakub Hruška and Santtu-Matias Rouvali are Principal Guest Conductors. Christoph von Dohnányi is Honorary Conductor for Life and Vladimir Ashkenazy is Conductor Laureate. Composer Unsuk Chin is Artistic Director of the *Music of Today* series.

As well as its membership of 80 players from all around the world, the Philharmonia's Emerging Artists programme develops the next generation of composers and instrumentalists. 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 Orchestra and the expertise within its membership.

Credits

The Philharmonia is proud to be supported using public funding by Arts Council England. A registered 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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2018/19 Season biography.