

# philharmonia orchestra

## PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

### *Website biography*

The Philharmonia is a world-class symphony orchestra for the 21st century. Based in London at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, the Philharmonia creates thrilling performances for a global audience. Through its network of residencies, the Orchestra has a national footprint, serving communities across England both in performance and through its extensive outreach and engagement programme.

Founded in 1945, in part as a recording orchestra for the nascent home audio market, today the Philharmonia uses the latest digital technology to reach new audiences for symphonic music. The Philharmonia is led by Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen, its Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor since 2008. Fellow Finn Santtu-Matias Rouvali takes over from Salonen as Principal Conductor in the 2021/22 season.

The Philharmonia is a registered charity that relies on funding from a wide range of sources to deliver its programme and is proud to be generously supported by Arts Council England.

### **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. Southbank Centre is currently closed due to COVID-19, but we are working closely with the venue to plan our return to live performance. 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 presented *Weimar Berlin: Bittersweet Metropolis*, a celebration of the feverish creativity of the Weimar era through the prism of its music, drama and film. Our orchestral programming is complemented by series including *Philharmonia at the Movies*, *Music of Today*, the Philharmonia Chamber Players and an Insights programme.

### **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, Anvil Arts 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 outreach and engagement 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.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, we are working with all our partner venues to maintain our relationship with audiences around the country, and in particular with groups of vulnerable young people and adults who have experienced the orchestra through our outreach programmes.

### **Global reach**

Internationally, the Philharmonia is normally active across Europe, Asia and the USA. Recent projects include a residency at the Cartagena International Music Festival, Colombia, in January 2019, which brought together live performances, digital experiences and a week-long side-by-side mentoring programme for young local musicians. In March 2019, Salonen led a US tour that featured two performances at Lincoln Center, New York, and visited CAL Performances in Berkeley, California. The Philharmonia and Salonen closed their 2018/19 touring season with a three-week residency at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence built around a critically acclaimed production of Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*.

In September 2019, the Orchestra travelled to Europe, including a return to Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie; in January 2020 Salonen led a tour of Japan and South Korea. Also in January 2020, the Philharmonia travelled to the Canary Islands with its Principal Conductor Designate, Santtu-Matias Rouvali.

Our strong digital programme has enabled us to maintain our international presence during lockdown, with streams of archive performances, educational films introducing the sections of the orchestra, and videos made at home by individual players giving an insight into the life of the orchestra to a global audience.

### **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 installations, *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 Ravinia Festival (Chicago) and at the SXSW Conference and Festival in Austin, Texas. The Orchestra's 2018/19 London Season opened with a new, audio-led VR installation, *VR Sound Stage*, which was presented for free in the foyer of Royal Festival Hall, and is now touring internationally.

A new research and development project, in a consortium led by the Royal Shakespeare Company and funded by the British Government's *Audience of the Future* programme, is exploring how immersive

technologies such as VR, Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) can re-imagine what a live performance can be.

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 YOUNG 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 over 97,000 subscribers.

### **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. In its most ambitious audience development project to date, the Philharmonia presented *The Virtual Orchestra* – a six-week festival of digital installations, VR, workshops and community engagement, and fringe performances – in each of its town-based residency locations in 2018 and 2019.

### **History and people**

The Philharmonia was founded in 1945 by EMI producer Walter Legge, and has worked with a who's who of twentieth century music, especially in the recording studio. Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini and Riccardo Muti 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. Santtu-Matias Rouvali is Principal Conductor Designate, succeeding Salonen in 2021. Jakub Hrůša is Principal Guest Conductor; 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 supports the next generation of composers, conductors and instrumentalists. Composers' Academy champions three developing composers each year. The Philharmonia works with Salonen and the Colburn School of Music in Los Angeles to deliver performance opportunities and training for the Salonen Fellows, talented young conductors on the conservatory's Negaunee Conducting Program. The Orchestra's 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.

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

[philharmonia.co.uk](http://philharmonia.co.uk)

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**2019/20 Season biography.**