
Philharmonia

Philharmonia Orchestra

1,000-word biography

The Philharmonia is a world-class symphony orchestra for the 21st century. Based in London at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, and with a thriving national and international touring schedule, 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 on stage 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 Orchestra 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.

The Orchestra's home is Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall where it has been resident since 1995. Orchestral programming is complemented by series including *Philharmonia at the Movies*, *Music of Today* and the Philharmonia Chamber Players. 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 Weimar Republic era through the prism of its music, drama and film.

The Philharmonia is orchestra-in-residence at venues and festivals across England: 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.

Internationally, the Philharmonia is active across Europe, Asia and the USA. Recent projects include a US tour with two performances at Lincoln Center, New York, and performances at CAL Performances in Berkeley, California (March 2019), and 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*. The 2019/20 season sees the Orchestra embark on major tours with Esa-Pekka Salonen. In September 2019, they travel to Europe, including a return to Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie; in January 2020 Salonen leads a tour of Japan and South Korea.

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 have introduced hundreds of thousands of people across the world to the symphony orchestra. 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

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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 Lennertz choose to record their scores for films, video games and television series with the Orchestra. 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 80,000 subscribers.

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.

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.

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2019/20 Season biography.