
Philharmonia

Philharmonia Orchestra

800-word biography

The Philharmonia Orchestra creates thrilling performances for a global audience.

Founded in 1945, in part as a recording orchestra for the growing home audio market, the Philharmonia has always pioneered the use of technology to reach broader audiences for orchestral music. During the Coronavirus pandemic, it has continued to create outstanding performances, experienced online by lifelong fans and first-time listeners on five continents.

The Philharmonia's home is Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, in the heart of London. It has been Resident Orchestra there since 1995. The Orchestra is also resident at venues and festivals across England: Bedford Corn Exchange, De Montfort Hall in Leicester, The Marlowe in Canterbury, Anvil Arts in Basingstoke, the Three Choirs Festival in the West of England, and Garsington Opera. Central to all its residencies is a Learning & Engagement programme that empowers people to engage with, and participate in, orchestral music.

The Philharmonia is a registered charity. The organisation relies on income from a range of sources to deliver its programme, and the Orchestra is proud to be generously supported by Arts Council England. During the pandemic it has received a grant from the Cultural Recovery Fund, along with support from stakeholders. This has enabled it not just to survive, but to create new online experiences for its audiences.

Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has been the Philharmonia's Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor since 2008. Fellow Finn Santtu-Matias Rouvali takes over from Salonen as Principal Conductor in the 2021/22 season, after four years as Principal Guest Conductor. Under Salonen and other key conductors, the Philharmonia has created a series of critically-acclaimed, visionary projects, distinctive for both their artistic scope and their depth of live and digital content.

In January 2021 the Orchestra announced a new Artist in Residence collaboration with House of Absolute. This collective of multidisciplinary artists works in hip hop and other contemporary dance styles, spoken word, writing, music production, and visual art.

The Philharmonia's international reputation derives in part from its extraordinary recording legacy, which in the last ten years has been built on by pioneering work with digital technology. Two giant audio-visual walk-through installations have introduced hundreds of thousands of people to the symphony orchestra. Its VR experiences, placing the viewer at the heart of the orchestra, have travelled around the world. In 2021, in a consortium led by the Royal Shakespeare Company and funded by the UK government's *Audience of the Future* programme, the Philharmonia present a new online interactive theatrical and musical experience, *Dream*. The Orchestra has won four Royal Philharmonic Society awards for its digital projects and audience engagement work.

Millions of cinema-goers and gamers have experienced the Philharmonia's music, as it has been the go-to orchestra for many film and video game composers both in the UK and in Hollywood since 1947. Its iPad app, *The Orchestra*, has sold tens of thousands of copies. The Philharmonia is Classic FM's Orchestra on Tour and broadcasts extensively on BBC Radio 3.

The Orchestra releases live recordings of signature concerts with Signum Records, including most recently its first recordings with Santtu-Matias Rouvali. In 2020, to mark the 75th anniversary of the Orchestra, Warner Classics released *Philharmonia: Birth of a Legend*, a 24-CD set of the Orchestra's early recordings.

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The Philharmonia's vibrant YouTube channel has over 110,000 subscribers, featuring performances, interviews, and educational content.

Throughout its history, the Philharmonia has toured across Europe, Asia and America. Just before the Coronavirus pandemic brought the world to a standstill, in January 2020 the Philharmonia and Esa-Pekka Salonen had a residency at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, featuring concerts that were voted the 'Best of 2020' by Japanese music magazine *Ongaku No Tomo*, alongside Virtual Reality experiences.

Previous touring projects include a trip to the Canary Islands with Santtu-Matias Rouvali (January 2020); a major US tour (March 2019) with Salonen; and a tour to Colombia (January 2019) that included concerts, a Virtual Reality installation and education work with young musicians. The Orchestra's online performances in 2020 were watched by brand new Philharmonia fans in Brazil, Sudan, Indonesia, India, and high above the Arctic Circle in Norway.

The Philharmonia Orchestra was founded by EMI producer Walter Legge, and has worked with a who's who of 20th- and 21st-century music. Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer and Riccardo Muti are just a few of the great artists to be associated with the Orchestra, and it has premiered works by Richard Strauss, Errollyn Wallen, Kaija Saariaho and many others.

The Philharmonia's Emerging Artists programme develops the next generation of composers and instrumentalists, and aims to increase diversity within the classical music industry.

The Philharmonia is a team of 80 world-class musicians from 16 countries. They look forward to bringing music into your life, through great concerts and ground-breaking projects, for the next 75 years and beyond.

philharmonia.co.uk

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