

Osmo Vänskä



Praised for his intense and dynamic performances, Osmo Vänskä is recognized for compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires, as well as the close rapport he establishes with the musicians he leads.

In 2003, Vänskä became the tenth Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra and has since drawn extraordinary reviews for concerts both at home and abroad, including appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, performances in communities around Minnesota, and European tours of major festivals and music capitals. Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra returned to Europe in 2009 for concerts at venues including the Cologne and Berlin Philharmonie, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Vienna Musikverein and the Barbican Centre in London. His performances led the Minnesota Orchestra to extend his

contract until 2015.

Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra have recently completed a five-year, five-disc project to record the complete Beethoven symphonies on the BIS label. The collection has amassed rave reviews, praised by The New York Times as *"the definitive [cycle] of our time"* and by the Financial Times as the *"modern Beethoven recording par excellence."* Their recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 received a 2008 Grammy nomination for "Best Orchestral Performance."

In 2009 Vänskä has embarked on a series of new recording initiatives with the Minnesota Orchestra, including a five-year project with BIS to record all five Beethoven Piano Concertos with pianist Yevgeny Sudbin; a disc of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony with BIS; and, for the Hyperion label, live recordings of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concertos Nos. 1, 2 and 3 and his *Concert Fantasia*, recorded over two years with pianist Stephen Hough.

Vänskä was Music Director of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra from 1988, and now holds the position of Conductor Laureate. During two decades at the helm, Vänskä transformed the regional ensemble into one of Finland's flagship orchestras; their partnership received widespread attention through its collection of innovative Sibelius recordings on the BIS label and its international performances at venues in London, Birmingham, Vienna and New York.

As a guest conductor, Vänskä has appeared with the Boston, Chicago, National, Dallas, Detroit, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and the Houston, San Francisco and St. Louis Symphonies.

In Europe, he has led such eminent orchestras as the Berliner Philharmoniker, the BBC Symphony and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestras, the Czech, Helsinki and London Philharmonic Orchestras, as well as the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Orchestre de Paris..

Vänskä began his music career as a clarinetist. He held the co-principal chair of the Helsinki Philharmonic (1977-82) and the principal chair of the Turku Philharmonic (1971-76). Following conducting studies under Jorma Panula at Finland's Sibelius Academy, Vänskä was awarded first prize in the 1982 Besançon International Young Conductor's Competition.

Three years later he began his tenure with the Lahti Symphony as Principal Guest Conductor, while also serving as Music Director of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and the Tapiola Sinfonietta. In addition, Vänskä served as Chief Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (1997-2002).

In recent years, Vänskä has enjoyed a return to performing on the clarinet, and he made his Twin Cities clarinet performance debut at the Sommerfest in 2005. Since then, he has often played chamber music with members of the Minnesota Orchestra, and performed as a clarinetist at Napa Valley's Music in the Vineyards festival and the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York.

Vänskä has recorded extensively on the BIS label. His numerous Sibelius recordings with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra for BIS, part of an ongoing complete Sibelius edition, have amassed numerous awards, including a 1996 Gramophone Award and Cannes Classical Award for the original version of the Symphony No. 5. His first-ever complete recording of *The Tempest* won the 1993 Prix Académie Charles Cros, and his original version of the Sibelius Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos won 1991 Gramophone Awards for Record of the Year and Best Concerto Recording.

The many honours and distinctions awarded to Vänskä include an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow, a privilege given in recognition of his tenure as Chief Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Minnesota's School of Music in 2008. He was also honoured with a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for his outstanding contribution to classical music. Vänskä was named Musical America Conductor of the Year in 2005.

2009/10 season only. Please contact HarrisonParrott if you wish to edit this biography.