Osmo Vänskä

Conductor

Music Director of Minnesota Orchestra for 18 years and of Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra since 2020, Osmo Vänskä is recognised for compelling interpretations of repertoire of all ages and an energetic presence on the podium. His democratic and inclusive style of work has been key in forging long-standing relationships with different orchestras.

Celebrating the last year of his tenure with Minnesota Orchestra this season, Osmo Vänskä presents some of his signature repertoire. He is joined by favourite guest soloists including Joshua Bell and Lisa Batiashvili, and continues with *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*, an Emmy Award-nominated series of performances for TV, radio and online audiences launched in 2020, developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vänskä has undertaken five major European tours, as well as historic trips to Cuba in 2015 – the first visit by an American orchestra since the two countries re-established diplomatic relations – and South Africa in 2018, as part of worldwide celebrations of Nelson Mandela’s Centenary – the first visit by an American orchestra, drawing together South African and American performers in musical expressions of peace, freedom and reconciliation, on a five-city tour following a successful return to London’s BBC Proms.

After a successful first season with Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, including opening and closing the Lotte Concert Hall Festival and recording works by Korean composer Isang Yun, he embarks on his second year with numerous concerts and community outreach projects.

He returns this season to the Symphony and Philharmonic orchestras of Pittsburgh, Antwerp, Helsinki, Netherlands Radio and Tokyo Metropolitan. While past guest conducting invitations include renowned international ensembles such as The Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Chicago symphony orchestras in North America; Orchestre de Paris, Berlin’s Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester in Europe, and London Philharmonic Orchestra in the UK; and the Shanghai Symphony and China, Hangzhou, Hong Kong and Taiwan philharmonic orchestras in Asia.

Vänskä’s commitment to educational work is also patent through his work with Curtis Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, leading a series of conducting seminars, and recently on tours to Europe and United States, and New World Symphony in Miami, where he also coaches its Conducting Fellows.

A distinguished recording artist for BIS label, Vänskä is currently recording all of Mahler’s symphonies with Minnesota Orchestra. With seven discs released to date, the Fifth Symphony received a Grammy nomination in 2017 for Best Orchestral Performance. They also recorded the complete symphonies of Beethoven and Sibelius to critical acclaim, winning a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2014 and receiving further nominations in different years.

Vänskä studied conducting at Finland’s Sibelius Academy and was awarded first prize in the 1982 Besançon Competition. He began his career as a clarinetist, occupying the co-principal chair of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. He regularly performs in chamber music, having been invited to La Jolla Summerfest, Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Naantali Summer Festival, Sysmä Summer Sounds, Music in Ruovesi, etc. He has recorded Bernhard Henrik Crusell’s three Clarinet Quartets and Kalevi Aho’s Clarinet Quintet for the BIS label and is in the process of recording several duos for clarinet and violin which he has commissioned with his wife, violinist Erin Keefe.

Vänskä is the recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, the Finlandia Foundation’s Arts and Letters award, and the 2010 Ditson Award from Columbia University. He holds honorary doctorates from the universities of Glasgow and Minnesota and was named Musical America’s 2005 Conductor of the Year. In 2013 he received the Annual Award from the German Record Critics’ Award Association for his involvement in BIS’s recordings of the complete works by Sibelius.