



HARRISON PARROTT

5 May, 2022

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA APPOINTS OSMO VÄNSKÄ AS CONDUCTOR LAUREATE

New role begins in September 2022, recognizing Vänskä's acclaimed leadership and many achievements with the Orchestra over 19 years

Next month Vänskä will conduct two final sets of concerts as music director, June 2-4 and June 10-12, 2022

The Minnesota Orchestra announced today the appointment of Osmo Vänskä as the Orchestra's Conductor Laureate, an ongoing role that recognizes his deep and far-reaching impact on the Minnesota Orchestra over 19 years as its music director. The appointment takes effect in September 2022.

Vänskä will conduct his final concerts as music director in two consecutive June weekends at Orchestra Hall, leading works by Felix Mendelssohn and Jaakko Kuusisto, June 2-4, and Gustav Mahler's Eighth Symphony, the *Symphony of a Thousand*, June 10-12, 2022. The following month he'll make a final appearance as clarinetist in a July 22 "NightCap" concert featuring Brahms' Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano, alongside pianist Jon Kimura Parker and Principal Cello Anthony Ross.

"Osmo Vänskä has significantly shaped the Orchestra's sound, programming and reputation over two decades," said Minnesota Orchestra Board Chair Joseph T. Green. "His new conductor laureate role honors the great musical heights to which he has led the Orchestra and recognizes the ongoing friendship and loyalty that will endure between him, this Orchestra and our community." As conductor laureate, Vänskä will annually return to conduct the Orchestra.

Said President and CEO Michelle Miller Burns, "Osmo's ongoing legacy is reflected in the membership of the Orchestra itself. He has brought so many talented musicians into the ensemble and developed a remarkable artistic cohesiveness and integrity which will carry forward for years to come. This new role also acknowledges the remarkable partnership he and the Orchestra have established with Minnesota audiences over two decades."





HARRISON PARROTT

Vänskä joined the Orchestra in September 2003 as its 10th music director and over the course of his tenure, he has consistently led the Minnesota Orchestra in performances of insight and virtuosity, whether in concerts at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, through large-scale recording initiatives of the symphonies of Beethoven, Sibelius and Mahler or on seven international tours and four Minnesota tours. In 2014, he led the Orchestra in winning a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance for an album in its Sibelius Symphonies series. In his second decade at the helm, Vänskä helped redefine traditional roles and approaches at the Minnesota Orchestra, developing a new programming model that expanded the leadership of musicians in artistic programming, championing a new touring model—centered on musical exchanges—that led to historic tours of Cuba and South Africa, and embracing the organization's turn toward televised and livestreamed performances to sustain it through the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Minnesota Orchestra has been my musical home for almost 20 years,” says Vänskä. “It means a lot that I will continue making music with my friends in the Minnesota Orchestra and remain linked to the Minnesota audiences who have been so receptive and supportive to my musical ideas over so many years.”

Violist Sam Bergman, chair of the Minnesota Orchestra Members Committee, said, “Osmo's legacy as one of the Minnesota Orchestra's most significant and long-serving music directors was already secure, and it seems only appropriate that he would take on the mantle of conductor laureate that was held for so long by Stan Skrowaczewski. We all look forward to continuing to work with Osmo in the coming years, and we know that our audience will appreciate his continued presence on our stage as well.”

As he steps down as music director at the end of the 2021-22 season in August, Vänskä will join founding Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Emil Oberhoffer and sixth Music Director Stanislaw Skrowaczewski as the longest-tenured music directors in Minnesota Orchestra history. Each led the ensemble for 19 seasons, and Stanislaw Skrowaczewski served as conductor laureate until his death in 2017.

TWO WEEKS OF FINALE CONCERTS





HARRISON PARROTT

After more than 750 performances on the Orchestra Hall podium, Osmo Vänskä will lead his final concerts as music director in six June performances spanning two weeks and two different programs. On June 2-4, he leads the Orchestra in Mendelssohn's Double Concerto featuring Concertmaster Erin Keefe and Finnish pianist Juho Pohjonen, as well as the world premiere of a symphony by Finnish violinist and composer Jaakko Kuusisto. A long-time friend and colleague of Vänskä's, Kuusisto died at age 48 in February; the symphony will feature final edits by his brother, Pekka Kuusisto.

These performances also feature a collaboration with the Sphinx Virtuosi, the dynamic chamber orchestra dedicated to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in classical music. Comprised of 18 of the nation's top Black and Latinx classical soloists, the Virtuosi will open the concert with Xavier Foley's *Ev'ry Voice*, a 2020 homage to *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, followed by the final movement of Alberto Ginastera's propulsive, rhythmically inventive Concerto for Strings, before joining Vänskä and the Orchestra for the Mendelssohn and Kuusisto works.

When he takes the stage for his final set of concerts, Vänskä will lead one of the most ambitious choral symphonies in classical music, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, involving four choirs, eight soloists and an orchestra of epic proportions. (A total of 1,029 musicians participated in the work's 1910 premiere, leading to its often-used subtitle, *Symphony of a Thousand*.) Mahler described the work as "the greatest thing I have done thus far."

The performances will be recorded live, and Vänskä and the Orchestra will hold three additional recording sessions the following week to capture the symphony for a forthcoming album on the BIS Records label as part of the Orchestra's ongoing project to record all ten Mahler symphonies. The Eighth Symphony will mark the ninth recording in the series; in November 2022 Vänskä will return to conduct and record Mahler's Third Symphony to complete the series.

