



## Biography - Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Conductor

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- Honorary Conductor Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra
- Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Designate / Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

Jukka-Pekka Saraste has established himself as one of the outstanding conductors of his generation, demonstrating remarkable musical depth and integrity. Born in Heinola, Finland, he began his career as a violinist before training as a conductor with Jorma Panula at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. An artist of exceptional versatility and breadth and renowned for his objective approach, he feels a special affinity with the sound and style of late Romantic music. He maintains a particularly strong connection to the works of Beethoven, Bruckner, Shostakovich, Stravinsky and Sibelius and is internationally celebrated for his interpretations of Mahler.

In September 2023, Jukka-Pekka Saraste has begun his tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. During his first season with this orchestra, he is delving deeper into the symphonic heritage of Sibelius, Mahler and Bruckner over several extended concert periods, as well as highlighting composers and music of our own time. As head of the Artistic Leadership Team of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, he emphasises the importance of music for both society and individuals, stating that experiencing music as part of a community is one of the greatest things an orchestra can offer its audience.

From 2010 to 2019, he served as Chief Conductor of the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. During his term, the orchestra built a reputation both at home and abroad, touring Austria, Spain, the Baltics, and Asia. The symphonic cycles of Sibelius, Brahms and Beethoven were exceptionally well received. Previously, from 2006 to 2013, Jukka-Pekka Saraste was Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. He was subsequently appointed Conductor Laureate, the very first such title bestowed by the orchestra. Earlier positions include the principal conductorships of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, where he is now Conductor Laureate, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra. He also served as Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Advisor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra. He founded the Finnish Chamber Orchestra, where he remains the Artistic Advisor.

Jukka-Pekka Saraste's guest engagements have led him to the major orchestras worldwide, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Munich Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Staatskapelle Berlin, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic,



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Vienna Symphony, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and the leading Scandinavian orchestras. In North America, he has conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Houston and Dallas Symphony as well as Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal. In recent years, Jukka-Pekka Saraste has developed a strong profile in opera and, following concert performances of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, Schönberg's *Erwartung* and Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, had great success at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna with a new scenic production of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, directed by Calixto Bieito, and Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* at the Finnish National Opera. In the 2020-2021 season, he conducted a new staging of Reimann's *Lear* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich which was revived in January 2023.

Coaching and mentoring young musicians at the beginning of their careers is of great importance to Jukka-Pekka Saraste. He is a founding member of the LEAD! Foundation, a mentorship programme for young conductors and soloists. Based in Finland, the foundation has run projects in Stockholm, Lausanne, Dortmund and Sofia. In 2020, he also created the annual Fiskars Summer Festival, an international platform for both Finnish and international artists to pass on their knowledge and experience to the next generation of musicians. In 2023, the festival featured a LEAD! Masterclass for conductors and a multinational symphony orchestra of young musicians who performed together with him and renowned guest artists.

Jukka-Pekka Saraste's extensive discography includes the complete symphonies of Sibelius and Nielsen with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and several well-received recordings with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra of works by Bartók, Dutilleux, Mussorgsky and Prokofiev for Warner Finlandia. His CDs with WDR Symphony Orchestra for Hänssler have likewise earned him much critical praise. They include Schönberg's *Pelleas and Melisande*, Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol*, Brahms' complete Symphonies as well as Mahler's 5th and 9th Symphony and Bruckner's Symphony No. 8. The complete cycle of Beethoven's symphonies can be regarded as a legacy of his tenure in Cologne.

Jukka-Pekka Saraste has received the Pro Finlandia Medal, the Sibelius Medal, the Finnish State Prize for Music and, most recently, the insignia of Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland. He holds honorary doctorates from York University, Toronto and Sibelius Academy, Helsinki.