

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC AND ESA-PEKKA SALONEN WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"What is happening between the Los Angeles Philharmonic and its music director is remarkable, and we do well to share it with the world. Technically, we cannot claim Salonen as a product of our culture. He grew up in Finland, a country with possibly the best music education in the world. He made his career in Europe. But in his dozen years at the helm of the Philharmonic, Los Angeles has transformed Salonen, and he has transformed Los Angeles. So, yes, we can claim him."

---*Los Angeles Times*

"The Salonen era in L.A. may mark a turning point in the recent history of classical music in America."

---*The New Yorker*

"...Salonen's success here provides a foolproof recipe for any orchestra. All it needs is a charismatic conductor with fresh ideas and an openness to new musical currents; a concert hall that people want to go to and that musicians like to play in; programs that treat music not as a museum culture but as a lively continuum; and a management and board willing to support experimental urges."

---*The New York Times*

"As a young composer, Salonen was a flashy, clever modernist. He's still flashy, clever and modern, but an alluring new dimension of lavish lyricism has been added to the mix, which gives the impression of worlds opening up."

---*Los Angeles Times*

"The love affair between Los Angeles and Salonen is real and ardent, and has been going on since he became the orchestra's tenth ever music director."

---*Musical America*

"For the past 14 years Salonen has been with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, raising it to such a level that it is now regarded as America's top symphony orchestra."

---*The Guardian*

"In 2003, with the opening of Frank Gehry's silver-winged Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown L.A., the Philharmonic acquired the most architecturally striking and acoustically satisfying performance space of modern times."

---*The New Yorker*

"...the proof is in the acoustics, and on that score the hall seems poised to live up to even the grandest claims made on its behalf. The wood-lined chamber produces a sound just dry and crisp enough to let musical textures emerge clearly and without fuss. Yet the overwhelming impression is of the physical warmth of the sound, an enveloping presence that is wondrously immediate."

---*San Francisco Chronicle*

"The sound was live, clear, and warm everywhere, even in the highest balcony seats..."

---*Boston Globe*

"How does it sound? The answer is great, often astonishingly so."

---*San Jose Mercury News*

"The hall is warmly resonant and yet also detailed...Sizzle and power both play well here, without harshness, and the softest soft notes still have plenty of presence."
--- *Orange County Register*

"The acoustics are terrific. The sound is clear, warm and true, so precise and so enveloping you can almost touch it. Instruments across the stage are audible in quiet passages and when the orchestra is blasting at full power."
--- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

"The first notes hit my ears with astonishing clarity and presence. Those inner voices so often obscured in lesser halls were fully audible, from the harp to the basses."
--- *Santa Barbara News-Press*

"At last this orchestra has a hall worthy of its stature."
--- *Washington Post*

"The place sounded like no other auditorium anyone has been able to think of."
--- *Hollywood Reporter*

"[Disney Hall] is a sensational place to hear music and an enchanting place to spend an evening. In richness of sound, it has few rivals on the international scene, and in terms of visual drama it may have no rival at all."
--- *The New Yorker*

"At a time when many orchestras are offering "safer," crowd-pleasing repertoire picks online, it's refreshing to see the L.A. Phil coming out of the gate with programming that speaks to why it is at the forefront of American orchestras today."
--- *Billboard*

"... I found Walt Disney Concert Hall - whose initial planning stages actually preceded those in Bilbao by a decade- an even richer, more visually rewarding building."
--- *The Toronto Star*

"Glimpsed from across the street on South Grand Avenue, where it occupies a full city block, it defies the ability of the mind-and the eye- to take it all in: a monumental whorl of shiny stainless steel and glass that manages to soar and swoop, twist and turn with such titanic elegance that it looks as though it had found its true home after years of wandering the galaxies."
--- *Vogue*

"With its curvaceous exterior and acoustically adroit interior, Gehry's building bestowed on the city an important architectural landmark and proved that L.A. residents actually do go to the symphony."
--- *Time*

"Yet in 2006, the Los Angeles Philharmonic tops the list of America's premier orchestras and serves as a lesson in how to update an august cultural institution without cheapening its work."
--- *New York Times*

"It is astonishingly beautiful, and its completion marks the re-establishment of downtown Los Angeles as an outstanding centre for the performing arts in the United States."
--- *Courier Mail*

"Los Angeles finally has a chance to be recognized for something other than films and glitz."

---Steven Spielberg as quoted in *InStyle*

"If ever an orchestra was riding the crest of a wave, it is the Los Angeles Philharmonic."

--- *The Times (London)*

"Los Angeles Philharmonic music director Esa-Pekka Salonen reveals himself a composer of distinction. (LA Variations') brief episodes reflect the title city in all its swaggering, multicultural energy. Salonen is also a brilliant orchestrator... Performances are definitive."

--- *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Esa-Pekka Salonen's LA Philharmonic are of uncontestable international caliber."

--- *Sunday Times (London)*

"Each piece, eloquently presented, offered a different vision of Stravinsky, turning over in his hands the shards of the very romanticism that he himself had shattered with the fabled 1913 premiere of *The Rite of Spring*. ...In Salonen's capable hands, the concerto's Baroque echoes were both beautifully rendered as gestures in themselves, but also poignant for their sense of innocence lost, like gorgeous flowers that one reaches out to touch only to discover that they are made of plastic."

--- *Newsday (New York)*

"(*LA Variations*) is sometimes quite tuneful and at other times billowy, scurrying, radiant, joyous, mysterious, even triumphant. The overall impression is of vital energy and sheer pleasure...I found the work thrilling, especially as brought to life by the stellar playing of Salonen's own orchestra..."

--- *American Record Guide*

"Anyone with the wrong idea of what musical life in Los Angeles is like would have had it quashed by Tuesdays' performance by the LA Philharmonic. This is a flexible orchestra, at home in both cutting edge music and as a purveyor of froth and fun at the Hollywood Bowl. ... What stuck out from his [Salonen's] interpretation though was just how fine the balance is between maintaining structural coherence and giving the various motifs space to breathe."

--- *The Scotsman (Edinburgh)*

"(Salonen's) new anthology of orchestral works is so good, you wonder whether he should compose full time. The music is like him --- stylish, smart, witty, outgoing, discreetly outrageous and brimming with surprises --- each a different journey through a different sound world without any foreseeable destination. The title piece, *LA Variations*, has the most spectacular orchestral writing since John Corigliano's *Symphony No. 1*."

--- *Philadelphia Inquirer*

"There is definitely a Salonen sound: cool and gleaming tones set mostly in middle and high registers, propulsively driven by mallet percussion and scurry woodwinds, underpinned by brass accents and covered by a silken veil of strings... Attractive and engaging."

--- *Star Ledger (New Jersey)*

"*LA Variations*...with hints of Sibelius and Stravinsky exemplifies a composer who embraces the past, but fashions contemporary music with a bold personality."

--- *Plain Dealer (Cleveland)*

"The scoring of *LA Variations* is dazzling...Best of all are the aggressive, wild cello concerto *Mania* and the orchestral piece *Giro*."
--- *The Guardian (London)*

"*LA Variations* has a kid-in-candy-shop quality to it...One senses the joy of a composer returning to his craft... One hears a conductor paying tribute to his own orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, relishing in its lithe athleticism and burly muscularity and smooth surfaces. ...The piece celebrates the power and possibilities of the symphony orchestra."
--- *Orange County Register*

"He is an astute conductor and a fascinating musical thinker. ...The orchestra...is lucky to have him...How lovely and serene Sibelius' Seventh Symphony, compacted into one long movement, came across. How evenly and how beautifully the orchestra, with its sophisticated sheen of string sound, slightly rough-sounding brass and elegant woodwinds, preambulated the work."
-- *Star Ledger*

"This is the second CD devoted to this Finnish composer (born 1958) who also happens to be a world-famous conductor. It reinforces the impression made by the chamber, vocal, and orchestral pieces on the first one (Finlandia 95607, May/June 1995) of an adventurous, technically sophisticated, aurally sensitive, confidently virtuosic and sometimes whimsical inventor of music very much aware of the innovators of the generation before his..."
--- *American Record Guide*

"...everything about this orchestra, with Salonen on the podium, possesses a polish that is waxed and buffed but not impersonal or slick. The playing retains its human side even when it is most impeccably dressed. ...His Seventh was often a revelation of tonal beauty and dramatic insights. Where other conductors use the symphony as vehicle for forced march, Salonen saw more the reflective qualities in the work, its philosophical ruminations, its coupling of a blazing fire and soft-grained human expression. No small feat."
---*The Post-Intelligencer (Seattle)*