

HarrisonParrott

Artist and Project Management

Pekka Kuusisto

“He’s a huge, charismatic talent. Let’s see more of him.”
– Richard Morrison, *The Times*, February 2007

Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto is one of the most versatile and distinctive musicians working today. Always demonstrating his extraordinary individuality and imagination, Pekka is unusually free and fluid in his approach and has been acclaimed for the spontaneity and freshness in his playing. As Pekka puts it: “I don’t play to be different or the same as anyone else, I just play it the way I think it and feel it.”



In 1995, Pekka became the first Finn to win the Sibelius Violin Competition. He says of his country: “I’m extremely proud that such a small country produced such a lot of really great music. Wherever I am, playing the Sibelius Concerto, I can see the landscapes of my homeland. It’s a bit like carrying around a small box of soil from your garden.”

Pekka became Artist in Residence at the Tapiola Sinfonietta in September 2006, a post he took up along with pianist Olli Mustonen and conductor Stefan Asbury. This season he is also involved in SIB, a new concert series in Hämeenlinna, Finland, choosing both programmes and artists. Despite the first concert only taking place recently, the exciting and diverse programming has already created waves of excitement in the Finnish press.

As Artistic Director of Finland’s Our Festival each summer, Pekka creates his own programme of events. In 2008, the festival welcomed mezzo-soprano Anne-Sofie von Otter and pianist Bengt Forsberg, and also saw the premiere of the ‘Tanabata’ project and the ‘Reddress’ installation by Korean artist Aamu Song. The 2009 festival encouraged listeners to link music from completely different genres and eras, such as Robert Schumann and Joy Division, where Pekka explored the common themes of the tragic figures. Pekka has also recently set up Our Orchestra to strengthen and continue collaborations with musicians who have taken part in his Festival and concert series.

Setting Pekka apart from most other violinists of his generation is his desire and ability to improvise; and his love of playing many different styles of music, channelling the same intensity into each genre. He has worked in the past with Finnish electronic jazz group Rinneradio and Norwegian noise duo Fe-Mail, consisting of French horn and vocals, performing electronic music based on improvisation with live sampling.

In May 2009 Kraft - Pekka’s Finnish violin and accordion duo with Johanna Juhola - released *Max Höjd*, their first CD (Texicalli Records). Other unusual projects include a collaboration with the young Austrian multi-percussionist Martin Grubinger where they performed in key venues throughout Germany and Austria, and a recital at New York’s Lincoln Center where Pekka combined Bach’s D minor Partita with electronic improvisation on chorale melodies.

Pekka is increasingly seen directing ensembles from the violin, including the London, Scottish, Irish and Zurich Chamber Orchestras. Last season, he returned to the Australian Chamber Orchestra and was a great hit with critics and audience alike. This season, he directs the Britten Sinfonia in a major tour of the Netherlands and UK, as well as the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Munich Chamber Orchestra and Camerata Nordica.

As a concert soloist, Pekka continues to work with some of the world’s greatest orchestras and conductors, offering some fascinating contemporary repertoire as well as fresh insights into the core works. Last season saw him perform the Peteris Vasks and Magnus Lindberg Violin Concertos with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and at the Casa da Musica in Porto respectively. Highlights of this season include a performance of the Thomas Adès Violin Concerto under the baton of the composer himself, and his role of Resident Artist at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra’s “Sibelius Festival” in April 2010.

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Pekka's most recent CD release is a selection of works for violin and guitar by Niccolò Paganini on the Ondine label with guitarist Ismo Eskelinen. Other releases include two highly-acclaimed discs of works for violin and piano by Sibelius with Heini Kärkkäinen and a recording of works for violin and orchestra, with the Tapiola Sinfonietta. Pekka also features in *4*, a DVD documentary about Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, presenting *Winter* in the snowscapes of Lapland.

Pekka was recently selected as one of eight individuals in the Konzerthaus Dortmund's "Junge Wilde" series, which celebrates a new generation of highly gifted, musically-diverse young performers. Pekka gives his first "Junge Wilde" recital of electronic solo improvisations at the Konzerthaus early in 2010.

Pekka Kuusisto plays a Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin of 1752 kindly loaned by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

www.ourfestival.fi

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