



KARI KRIIKKU

Clarinet

As reported in The New Yorker it is not an uncommon occurrence for this consummate artist to bring his audience to its feet, even if the repertoire, or Kari Kriikku himself, is being heard for the first time. A champion of contemporary music, Kari Kriikku is renowned for his interpretation of virtuosic new clarinet works written for him by composers such as Michel van der Aa, Unsuk Chin, Magnus Lindberg, Kimmo Hakola, Kaija Saariaho and Jukka Tiensuu.

Upcoming engagements in the 2023/2024 season include performances of the Saariaho concerto “D’OM LE VRAI SENS” with Real Filharmonía de Galicia and Baldur Brönnimann. Kriikku also returns to Oulu Symphony Orchestra under the baton of John Storgårds for a performance of Jukka Tiensuu’s clarinet concerto “Missa”. Further performances of Jukka Tiensuu’s work include “Puro” for clarinet and orchestra with Kuopio Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Raiskin, both of Tiensuu’s concertos were written for Kari Kriikku in 2007 and 1989 respectively.

Highlights of other new works Kriikku has premiered include Unsuk Chin’s clarinet concerto (2014) which he performed with Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Kent Nagano, New York Philharmonic with Alan Gilbert, WDR Sinfonieorchester, Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya and Philharmonia Orchestra London with Nicholas Collon. In addition to performances with BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Malmö Symphony Orchestra and Ilan Volkov, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra with Jukka-Pekka Saraste, in Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw with Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Xian Zhang, and with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester with Stefan Asbury.

Kaija Saariaho’s “D’OM LE VRAI SENS” received its premiere with Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo which has since been performed with New York Philharmonic and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France with Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig with Vladimir Jurowski, BBC Symphony Orchestra with David Robertson, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic with Olari Elts, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in Dublin with Ilan Volkov, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestra with Otto Tausk.

Other highlights include performances of Kimmo Hakola’s vibrant concerto with Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and Magnus Lindberg’s concerto with a spectacular premiere at London’s 2007 BBC Proms with BBC Symphony Orchestra and Semyon Bychkov, and performances with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic at Hollywood Bowl, etc. Meanwhile, Kriikku’s ingenious Bizarre Bazaar programme, as a homage to the more exotic, less well-known repertoire for clarinet, drew attention all over Finland and around the world.

Kriikku has recorded most of these works for Ondine including Jukka Tiensuu’s “Missa” with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and John Storgårds. Lindberg’s Clarinet Concerto recording was nominated in the 2006 Gramophone Awards and the new Saariaho work with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo won the Jury’s Award at the BBC Music Magazine Awards 2013.

Kari Kriikku’s musical inventiveness and fresh attitude towards traditional performances not only as a soloist, commissioner but also as Artistic Director of Avanti! chamber ensemble have been further recognised when in 2009, Kriikku was announced recipient of the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize. Kari Kriikku was on the jury panel for the 68th ARD International Music Competition (Clarinet category) in Munich in September 2019.