



## 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.

The 2024/25 season sees Kari Kriikku give two world premieres: in April 2025 he performs John Buckley's clarinet concerto with the NSO Dublin; and later HK Gruber's clarinet concerto with the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien. Other events include five performances in venues across Spain of the Saariaho concerto 'D'OM LE VRAI SENS' with the Basque National Orchestra and Juanjo Mena. Kari Kriikku also returns to the Stavanger Symfoniorkester under the baton of Emilia Hoving for a performance of Magnus Lindberg's clarinet concerto.

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

Kaija Saariaho's "D'OM LE VRAI SENS" received its premiere with Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Sakari Oramo and 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 of Kriikku's career so far include performances of Kimmo Hakola's vibrant concerto with Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Kari Kriikku played a spectacular premiere of Magnus Lindberg's concerto at London's 2007 BBC Proms with BBC Symphony Orchestra and Semyon Bychkov, and gave performances with the New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic at Hollywood Bowl, among others. Meanwhile, Kriikku's ingenious Bizarre Bazaar programme, as a homage to the more exotic, lesser known repertoire for clarinet, attracted attention from across Finland and around the world.

Kriikku has recorded most of the above-mentioned works for Ondine, as well as Jukka Tiensuu's 'Missa' with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and John Storgårds. Lindberg's Clarinet Concerto recording was nominated in the 2006 Gramophone Classical Music Awards, meanwhile 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.

In 2009, Kari Kriikku's musical inventiveness and fresh attitude towards traditional performances - not only as a soloist and commissioner but also as Artistic Director of Avanti! chamber ensemble, a role which he held for 25 years - was further recognised when Kriikku was announced as a recipient of the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize. Furthermore, Kari Kriikku was on the jury panel for the 68<sup>th</sup> ARD International Music Competition (Clarinet category) in Munich in September 2019.