

Biography

Eri Klas

Eri Klas, a native of Estonia whose musical godfather was the legendary violinist and conductor David Oistrakh, frequently guest conducts on the North American continent.

Mr. Klas made his US debut in 1991 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. In 1995, he made his debuts with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony following highly successful appearances at the Blossom and Ravinia festivals. Since then, he has appeared with most of the major North American orchestras including the Boston, St. Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, Vancouver and National symphonies and the Minnesota Orchestra.

Equally in demand throughout Europe, Mr. Klas was named the Chief Conductor of the Novaya Opera Theatre of Moscow in March 2006. In addition, he is currently the Artistic Director of the Tallinn Philharmonic in Estonia; Principal Guest Conductor of the Finnish National Opera and the Holland Kammerphilharmonie; and Conductor Laureate of the Tampere Philharmonic and the Estonian National Opera. He has guest conducted the Berlin, Munich and Rotterdam Philharmonics and appears regularly with the Tonhalle Orchestra, Swedish and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestras, BBC Philharmonic, Stockholm and Helsinki Philharmonics, RAI Turino and the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra among others.

Recent and upcoming engagements in Mr. Klas' North American schedule include guest appearances with the Toronto, Houston, Dallas, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Milwaukee, Seattle and Phoenix symphonies and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa. In March 2009, he will lead the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra on an extensive tour throughout the United States. In addition to his work in the Netherlands, Finland and Estonia, recent and upcoming engagements in Europe and Asia include orchestral concerts and opera productions in Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Japan and Russia, both in St. Petersburg and with the Bolshoi Opera Orchestra in Moscow.

Eri Klas is closely associated with leading contemporary composers. He conducted the world premiere of Alfred Schnittke's *Per Gynt* at the Hamburg Opera and the Royal Opera House in Stockholm and collaborated with Natalia Gutman performing the world premiere of Schnittke's *First Cello Concerto* with the Munich Philharmonic. A great champion of Estonian composers, he has conducted world premieres of works by Pärt, Tamberg, Tormis, Tubin and Eller, whose compositions he also often introduces in the US. In addition, Mr. Klas conducted the first performance of Henryk Gorecki's *Flute Concerto* in Amsterdam and the US premiere of the same work with the Chicago Symphony. His discography includes Schnittke's *Third Symphony*, ballet music from *Per Gynt* and *Four Violin Concerti* as well as works by Sibelius on the BIS and Ondine labels. Ms. Klas' most recent release is a CD of orchestral works by John Corigliano with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra for Ondine.

Eri Klas began his conducting studies at the Tallinn Conservatory and upon graduation went to St. Petersburg to work with Nikolai Rabinovich. He made his debut at the Estonian National Theatre in Tallinn in

1964 conducting Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story. In 1969, he was appointed assistant conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and for the next 12 years appeared regularly on the podium to conduct the famed Bolshoi orchestra, taking part in numerous opera, ballet and orchestral productions in Moscow and on tours throughout Europe. He was named Music Director in 1975 of the Estonian National Opera, where he served for 20 years before becoming conductor laureate. Between 1985 and 1990, he was Music Director of the Royal Opera in Stockholm and held the position of Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra from 1996-2003.

Greatly interested in the education of young musicians, Mr. Klas has worked with many international youth orchestras. He has conducted the Estonian Youth Orchestra and the Sibelius Academy Orchestra numerous times, including on a tour to China with the latter. In addition, he has worked with the Irish Youth Orchestra and led the Asian Youth Orchestra on tours throughout Asia and Europe with Gidon Kremer as soloist. Mr. Klas was also a professor of conducting at the Sibelius Academy from 1993-1997 and since 1997 has held the same position with the Estonian Music Academy.

Mr. Klas has been awarded the Order of "Nordstjernen" from His Majesty King Carl Gustav of Sweden, the Order of Finnish Lion and an honorary doctorate from the Estonian Music Academy. A former Estonian lightweight junior boxing champion, he is a member of the Estonian Olympic Committee, Chairman of the Estonian Cultural Foundation and a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF.