

Kaija Saariaho short biography

Kaija Saariaho is a prominent member of a group of Finnish artists who are making a worldwide impact. She studied in Helsinki, Fribourg and Paris

At IRCAM, Saariaho developed techniques of computer-assisted composition and acquired fluency in working on tape and with live electronics. This experience influenced her approach to writing for orchestra, with its emphasis on the shaping of dense masses of sound in slow transformations. Significantly, her first orchestral piece, *Verblendungen* (1984), involves a gradual exchange of roles and character between orchestra and tape. And even the titles of her, linked, pair of orchestral works, *Du Cristal* (1989) and *...à la Fumée* (1990) suggest her preoccupation with colour and texture. Although much of her catalogue comprises chamber works, she has turned increasingly to larger forces and broader structures, such as *Orion* (2004), *Laterna Magica* (2008), *Circle Map* (2008).

The detailed notation using harmonics, microtonality and detailed continuum of sound extending from pure tone to unpitched noise – all features found in one of her most frequently performed works, *Graal Théâtre* for violin and orchestra (1994). Her catalogue also includes *Aile du songe* (2001), *Notes on Light* (2006), *D'OM LE VRAI SENS* (2010), *Maan Varjot* (2014). In 2015, Gerald Finley and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, premier *True Fire* for baritone and orchestra.

From later nineties, Saariaho has turned to opera, with outstanding success: *L'Amour de Loin* (2000), *Adrian Mater* (2006), *Emilie* (2010) and the oratorio *La Passion de Simone* (2006). Her opera *Only the Sound Remains* was premiered in March 2016 at The Dutch National Opera. Other performances will follow in Paris, Helsinki, Madrid and Toronto.

Saariaho has claimed the major composing awards: Grawemeyer Award, Wihuri Prize, Nemmers Prize, Sonning Prize, Polar Music Prize. In 2015 she was the judge of the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award.

Kaija Saariaho's harp concerto *Trans* was premiered in August 2016 by Xavier de Maistre and The Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Martínez-Izquierdo at the Suntory Hall, Tokyo.