

Anssi Karttunen, Violoncello

Biography

Anssi Karttunen has always been on the cutting edge of classical music performance and is one of the most innovative cellists in today's international music scene. He started learning the cello as a 4-year-old in Finland, a uniquely fertile ground for music and musicians, and subsequently built up a worldwide reputation both as a soloist and chamber musician. In his repertoire, he takes a fresh look at the well-known masterpieces and brings forgotten works to the public ear, as well as making own original transcriptions. He plays on modern, classical, and baroque cellos, as well as violoncello piccolo and electric cello. The latter features prominently in his current solo projects, which include images, video and electronics.

He is a passionate advocate of contemporary music. He has performed over 170 world premieres, collaborating with such composers as Magnus Lindberg, Kaija Saariaho, Pascal Dusapin, Luca Francesconi and Tan Dun. An astounding 29 concertos have been written for him. He premiered Magnus Lindberg's Cello Concerto No.1 with the Orchestre de Paris and Cello Concerto No. 2 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Mania* with Avanti! and Luca Francesconi's *Rest* with the RAI Torino. Kaija Saariaho wrote her concerto *Notes on Light* for Anssi Karttunen and he premiered it with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, who commissioned the work. Since 2007, he has performed the concerto over 50 times with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio, NDR Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, and the New World Symphony among others. Future plans include premieres of new works by Antti Auvinen, Ramon Lazkano and Sean Shepherd. In 2018, he premiered Betsy Jolas's *Side Roads* with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Gérard Korsten. Together with pianist Nicolas Hodges, he has recorded the works for cello and piano by the composer, who will celebrate her 100th birthday in 2026, on WDR, almost all of them as premiere recordings.

Anssi Karttunen has worked with world-renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, BBC Symphony, NHK Orchestra, Southwest German Radio Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Ensemble Modern, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Mahler Chamber Orchestra and many more. He also performs regularly as a soloist and chamber musician at Europe's most important music festivals, including Edinburgh, Salzburg, Lockenhaus, Berlin, Venice, Strasbourg and Helsinki. His Zebra Trio, with violinist Ernst Kovacic and violist Steven Dann, performs concerts on both sides of the Atlantic. He also enjoys close collaborations with choreographer Diana Theodoridis and the producer, composer and multi-instrumentalist John Paul Jones.

His recordings traverse a broad musical spectrum, including Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano on period instruments and 20th century solo pieces. He has released recordings of concertos by Lindberg, Saariaho, and Salonen on Sony Classical and a DVD of Tan Dun's *The Map* for cello, video and orchestra on Deutsche Grammophon. Two of Anssi Karttunen's recordings were nominated for a Gramophone Award in 2013: a CD of Magnus Lindberg's chamber music works and Henri Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain*, recorded with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Esa-Pekka Salonen on Deutsche Grammophon, which was chosen as the best contemporary recording of 2013. His recent recordings include Toshio Hosokawa's Concerto *Chant* for Naxos, his own transcription of Brahms' String Quintet for Toccata Classics as well as two tango CDs for Petals and Albany.

Born in 1960, Anssi Karttunen studied with Erkki Rautio, William Pleeth, Jacqueline du Pré and Tibor de Machula, among others. From 1999 until 2005 he was principal cellist with the London Sinfonietta. He was the Artistic Director of the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra between 1994 and 1998 the Suvisoitto Festival in Porvoo, Finland from 1994 until 1997. He was the artistic director of the Helsinki Biennale in 1995 and 1997 and the Festival Musica Nova Helsinki in 2015. He frequently gives masterclasses, for example at Carnegie Hall, at Cello Biennale Amsterdam, at the Juilliard School or at the Royal Academy of Music in London. At the University of Berkeley, he taught and performed as a Regents' Lecturer in the autumn of 2015. In 2008, he initiated the annual Creative Dialogue workshop in Santa Fe in collaboration with the Sibelius Academy. He started teaching at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris in the autumn of 2014. Anssi Karttunen plays on a Francesco Ruggeri cello.

2024/2025 season

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