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AMERICAN MUSIC CENTER HONORS ESA-PEKKA SALONEN AND PETER MARTINS WITH LETTERS OF DISTINCTION AT NEW YORK CITY BALLET WORLD PREMIERE

On June 22, 2010, the American Music Center presented Letters of Distinction to two outstanding leaders in contemporary American music: composer/conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen and choreographer/New York City Ballet Master in Chief Peter Martins. Salonen and Martins were honored on stage at Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater before the world premiere of Martins's new ballet *Mirage*, which was conducted by Salonen and featured the score of his Violin Concerto in its New York premiere.

Ed Yim, AMC Vice Chairman, presented the awards noting that, "Every year, the Center awards its Letter of Distinction to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to our field....That one gentleman hails from Finland and one from Denmark only makes the presentation of the American Music Center's award more meaningful. American music — indeed American art — has always been about the embracing of different nationalities in our uniquely blended national context...On the evening of the world premiere of Mr. Martins's ballet and the NY Premiere of Mr. Salonen's Violin Concerto, both created for American companies by true champions of new work, it is my distinct honor on behalf of the board and artists of the American Music Center to award our Letter of Distinction to these two distinguished men." (*Mr. Yim's complete introduction and congratulatory comments follow below.*)

Additional Letter of Distinction awardees Jack Beeson, Fred Ho, Meredith Monk and the Society for New Music — joined by the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), winner of our 2010 Trailblazer Award — were honored on May 3, 2010 at AMC's Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony at the Chelsea Art Museum. Francis Thorne, winner of our Founders Award, will receive his award at a later date. (Biographies of the 2010 Letter of Distinction honorees follow.)

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Mr. Yim's introduction and congratulatory comments:

“Good evening, I’m Ed Yim, the Vice Chairman of the American Music Center’s board of directors, and tonight it is my pleasure to be with you to present Peter Martins and Esa-Pekka Salonen with the Center’s Letter of Distinction. Founded by a group led by Aaron Copland in 1939, the American Music Center is the national service organization for composers, providing services, advocacy and funding for the community of new American music. Every year, the Center awards its Letters of Distinction to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to our field.

Esa-Pekka Salonen, who will conduct his own composition Violin Concerto tonight, served as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a distinguished 17 years. During that time, he not only composed works such as LA Variations, Foreign Bodies, Wing on Wing and Insomnia, he also premiered works by American composers such as John Adams, William Kraft, Bernard Rands, Steven Stucky, Tan Dun, and Augusta Read Thomas. He made the LA Philharmonic’s Green Umbrella series one of the most important contemporary music series in the country.

Peter Martins, the New York City Ballet’s Ballet Master in Chief, has energetically, and with vision, carried on the tradition of his mentor George Balanchine by making the creation of new work — both choreographic and musical — a core mission of the NYC Ballet. Mr. Balanchine received this award himself in 1969. Among the composers whom Peter Martins has commissioned are: Jay Greenburg, Michael Torke, Wynton Marsalis, Charles Wuorinen, John Adams and Bright Sheng.

That one gentleman hails from Finland and one from Denmark only makes the presentation of the American Music Center’s award more meaningful. American music — indeed American art — has always been about the embracing of different nationalities in our uniquely blended national context. Artists come from all over the world to both absorb and inform our country’s creative dialogue.

On the evening of the world premiere of Mr. Martins’s ballet and the NY premiere of Mr. Salonen’s Violin Concerto, both created for American companies by true champions of new work, it is my distinct honor on behalf of the board and artists of the American Music Center to award our Letter of Distinction to these two distinguished men.”

AMC Awards: History and Descriptions

Since 1964, the American Music Center has annually awarded the **Letter of Distinction** to recognize those who have made a significant contribution to the field of contemporary American music. This year’s Letter of Distinction recipients join a celebrated group of individuals and organizations who have received this honor, including George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, Joan Tower, Merce Cunningham, Morton Feldman, Laurie Anderson, Dizzy Gillespie, Steve Reich, Michael Tilson Thomas, Virgil Thomson, Joan La Barbara, Randy Weston, the Kronos Quartet, Bang on a Can, Dawn Upshaw, and the American Composers Orchestra.

The **Founders Award**, established in 1999, is named in honor of the six founders of the American Music Center: Aaron Copland, Howard Hansen, Marion Bauer, Otto Luening, Quincy Porter and Harrison Kerr. It celebrates lifetime achievement in the field of new American music. Previous winners include: Elliott Carter, Lou Harrison, Milton Babbitt, and Steve Reich. Last year’s honoree was Gunther Schuller.

The **Trailblazer Award**, instituted in 2003, honors those deserving of commendation and support from the American contemporary music community for their early and mid-career efforts toward championing new music. Previous winners have included Matt Haimovitz, eighth blackbird, and Derek Bermel.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN MUSIC CENTER LETTER OF DISTICTION HONOREES – 2010

PETER MARTINS

Danish-born Peter Martins began his association with New York City Ballet in 1967, when he was invited to dance the title role in George Balanchine's *Apollo* during the company's appearance at the Edinburgh Festival. He then performed as a guest artist with NYCB for three years before joining the company as a principal dancer in 1970. In 1981, Martins was named Ballet Master for NYCB, a title he shared with Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and John Taras. From 1983, following Balanchine's death, Martins served as Co-Ballet Master in Chief with Robbins, assuming sole directorship of the company in 1989. In addition, Martins is the Artistic Director and Chairman of Faculty of the School of American Ballet, the official school of NYCB. Martins began his career as a choreographer in 1977 with *Calcium Light Night*, set to several pieces of music by Charles Ives. He has since created more than 80 ballets — primarily for NYCB, ranging from *pas de deux* to large-scale pieces. Martins's commitment to American music is evidenced by his commissioning of scores from such composers as John Adams, Wynton Marsalis, Christopher Rouse, and Charles Wuorinen. In addition to having received numerous other awards, Martins was made a Knight of The First Order of Dannebrog by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark in September of 1983.

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN

Esa-Pekka Salonen is renowned both for his striking compositions and his illuminating interpretations of contemporary music. The Helsinki-born Salonen has led countless premieres of new works since his arrival in the United States in 1992 to serve as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic—a position he held until 2009. (He is now Conductor Laureate.) A champion of American composers, he has conducted world premieres of works by John Adams, William Kraft, Bernard Rands, Steven Stucky, Tan Dun, and Augusta Read Thomas, among others, and has recorded major works by John Corigliano, Bernard Herrmann, and Wynton Marsalis. He has also introduced American audiences to works by some of the most respected international composers, including Franco Donatoni, Anders Hillborg, Magnus Lindberg, Witold Lutoslawski, Kaija Saariaho, and Rodion Shchedrin. Being such a strong advocate for the music of other composers initially made it difficult for Salonen to have time to work on his own compositions, but in recent years he has been able to take time off from his demanding conducting schedule to actively compose large-scale works, many of which have been inspired by his adopted California homeland. *LA Variations*, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, had a triumphant premiere in January 1997 and has since proven to be one of the most popular orchestral works of recent decades. *Wing on Wing*, a 2004 score for two sopranos and orchestra inspired by Frank Gehry's remarkable architecture for Walt Disney Concert Hall, has also been highly successful both in the United States and abroad. His 2009 Violin Concerto for Leila Josefowicz has recently toured Europe and will be performed as the score for a new ballet danced by the New York City Ballet this June.

The **American Music Center** is dedicated to building a national community of artists, organizations, and audiences, creating, performing, and enjoying new American music. Since its founding in 1939, AMC has been a leader in providing field-wide advocacy, support, and connection. AMC **advocates** for the community through its media programs; **supports** the community by making grants to composers and ensembles each year, and by offering professional development services to artists; and **connects** the community with an array of information services designed to facilitate performances, including a vast, searchable online database of 50,000 American works by over 6,000 composers, publications compiling opportunities in new music and other information useful to industry professionals, and benefits and services for nearly 2,500 members in all 50 states and around the world.

Historical List of American Music Center Award Recipients

Founders Award

- 2010** Francis Thorne
- 2009** Gunther Schuller
- 2008** Steve Reich
- 2007** Philip Glass
- 2006** Milton Babbitt
- 2005** William "Count" Basie (posthumous); Charles Ives (posthumous)
- 2004** Ornette Coleman
- 2003** Betty Freeman; Lou Harrison (in memoriam)
- 2001** John Duffy
- 1999** Elliott Carter

Trailblazer Award

- 2010** International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)
- 2008** Derek Bermel
- 2007** eighth blackbird
- 2005** The Minnesota Commissioning Club
- 2004** Matt Haimovitz
- 2003** George Steel/Miller Theatre

New Music Educator Award

- 2009** New World Symphony
- 2007** Charles Hamm

Letter of Distinction

- 2010** Jack Beeson; Fred Ho; Peter Martins; Meredith Monk; Esa-Pekka Salonen; Society for New Music
- 2009** La Monte Young; Albany Records
- 2008** Robert Ashley; Joan La Barbara; Edgar Meyer; Ned Rorem; Joan Tower
- 2007** Marin Alsop; T.J. Anderson; John Corigliano; Ralph Jackson; Terry Riley
- 2006** Chanticleer; Bill Frisell; Alex Ross; Billy Taylor
- 2005** Laurie Anderson; Lukas Foss; Ahmad Jamal; Richard Kessler; Gian Carlo Menotti; The Other Minds Festival; Frances Richard
- 2004** John Adams; Art Ensemble of Chicago; Dave Brubeck; Ben Johnston; George Perle; Stephen Sondheim; Dawn Upshaw; Yale Oral History of American Music/Vivian Perlis
- 2003** George Crumb; Ronald Freed (in memoriam); Kyle Gann; Steve Reich; Wayne Shorter
- 2002** Henry Cowell (in memoriam); Phyllis Curtin; Sylvia Goldstein, Ursula Oppens, John Schaefer
- 2001** Donald Erb; Hale Smith; Mark Swed; Lyn Austin (in memoriam); Teresa Sterne (in memoriam)
- 2000** Composers Recordings, Inc.; John Harbison; Robert Hurwitz; K. Robert Schwarz (in memoriam); Michael Tilson Thomas
- 1999** Ellis Freedman; Philip Glass; California EAR Unit; Harvey Lichtenstein; Mel Powell (in memoriam)
- 1998** Arnold Broido; Yo-Yo Ma; George Walker; Bette Snapp (in memoriam)
- 1997** Merce Cunningham; Tania Leon; Paul Sperry; Jacob Druckman (in memoriam)
- 1996** Earle Brown; Thomas Buckner; Randy Weston; Ulysses Kay (in memoriam)
- 1995** Ed London and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony; Max Roach; Gregg Smith
- 1994** David Baker; Arthur Cohn; Francis Goelet
- 1993** Morton Gould; Modern Jazz Quartet; Dizzy Gillespie (in memoriam); Stephen Albert (in memoriam)
- 1992** (none awarded due to schedule change)
- 1991** Bang on a Can; New World Records; Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust
- 1990** Muhal Richard Abrams; Pauline Oliveros; Lawrence Leighton Smith and the Louisville Orchestra
- 1989** Leo Ornstein; Minna Lederman Daniels; and Jan DeGaetani (in memoriam)
- 1988** Cecil Taylor; Sylvia Smith and Smith Publications; Peter Garland and Soundings Press
- 1987** Ornette Coleman; Kronos Quartet; Morton Feldman (in memoriam); Vincent Persichetti (in memoriam)

1986 Lou Harrison; Betty Freeman
1985 Gunther Schuller; Margaret Jory (in memoriam); Leonard Fleischer of Exxon, Howard Klein of the Rockefeller Foundation, and Frank Hodsoll of the National Endowment for the Arts for the Meet the Composer Orchestra Residencies Program
1984 Milton Babbitt; KPFA/Charles Amirkhanian; St. Louis Symphony/Leonard Slatkin
1983 Robert Erickson; C.F. Peters Corporation/Evelyn Hinrichsen; Paul Jacobs (in memoriam)
1982 Henry Brant; Institute for Studies in American Music/H. Wiley Hitchcock, founding director; Robert Miller (in memoriam)
1981 Conlon Nancarrow; American Composers Orchestra/Francis Thorne, Dennis Russell Davies
1980 Meet the Composer/John Duffy; Samuel Barber
1979 John Cage; Lawrence Morton
1978 Leonard Bernstein; Nicolas Slonimsky
1977 Hugo Weisgall; Martin Bookspan
1976 Virgil Thomson; Paul Fromm
1975 Aaron Copland; Otto Luening
1974 Koussevitsky Foundation; Olga Koussevitsky
1973 Elliott Carter; Roy Harris
1972 Hugo Weisgall; Max Pollikoff
1971 Howard Hanson; Roger Sessions
1970 Aaron Copland; Leopold Stokowski; Benjamin Steinberg
1969 Stefan Wolpe; George Balanchine; Samuel Rosenbaum
1968 Roger Sessions; Alberto Ginestera
1967 William Schuman
1965 Adele Addison; Milton Feist; Henry Allen Moe; Thomas Scherman
1964 Claire Reis; Donald Engle; Richard Franko Goldman; Virgil Thomson

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