

Conductor, composer and violinist Jaakko Kuusisto enjoys an extensive career that was launched by a series of successes in international violin competitions in the 1990s. Having recorded concertos by some of the most prominent Finnish contemporary composers, such as Rautavaara, Aho, Sallinen and Pulkkis, he is one of the most frequently recorded Finnish instrumentalists. When BIS Records launched a project of complete Sibelius recordings, Kuusisto had a major role in the violin works and string chamber music. Moreover, his discography contains several albums outside the classical genre.

Kuusisto's conducting repertoire is equally versatile and ranges from baroque to the latest new works, regardless of genre. He has worked with many leading orchestras, including Minnesota Orchestra; Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras; NDR Hannover, DeFilharmonie in Belgium; Chamber Orchestras of Tallinn and Lausanne; Helsinki, Turku and Tampere Philharmonic Orchestras; Oulu Symphony Orchestra as well as the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra. Kuusisto recently conducted his debut performances with the Krakow Sinfonietta and Ottawa's National Arts Center Orchestra, as well as at the Finnish National Opera's major production *Indigo*, an opera by heavy metal cello group Apocalyptica's Eicca Toppinen and Perttu Kivilaakso. The score of the opera is also arranged and orchestrated by Kuusisto.

Kuusisto performs regularly as soloist and chamber musician and has held the position of artistic director at several festivals. Currently he is the artistic director of the Oulu Music Festival with a commitment presently until 2017. Kuusisto also enjoys a longstanding relationship with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra: having served as concertmaster during 1999-2012, his collaboration with the orchestra now continues with frequent guest conducting and recordings, to name a few. One particularly successful area has been a series of pop projects together with Vocal Ensemble Rajaton, featuring the music of ABBA, Queen and The Beatles in custom-made arrangements mostly written by Kuusisto himself. When it comes to recordings, his collaboration with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra has been critically acclaimed. This includes albums with music by Armas Järnefelt, Kalevi Aho, Jaakko's father Ilkka Kuusisto, and especially Jaakko's own Violin Concerto with Elina Vähälä as soloist.

Kuusisto's compositions consist of more than 30 opuses: chamber and vocal music, orchestral pieces, operas, as well as music for films. His family opera, *The Canine Kalevala*, was hugely popular at the Savonlinna Opera Festival and ran three seasons. Moreover, his latest opera *Elämälle* about composer Oskar Merikanto's life was received with acclaim at the Ilmajoki Music Festival in June 2015 and 2016. Kuusisto's piano concerto for Dejan Lazic was premiered with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in April 2016, conducted by the composer himself. Currently Kuusisto is working on a bassoon concerto, which is commissioned by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and will be premiered in spring 2017. In the summer 2016 BIS Records released an album called "*Glow*", which consists of Kuusisto's chamber music pieces.

Jaakko Kuusisto plays a Matteo Goffriller violin dated 1702.