

# biography



“... utter mastery of the instrument with rich sound and searching musicianship.”

*New York Times*

## **LEONIDAS KAVAKOS – VIOLIN/CONDUCTOR**

Leonidas Kavakos is recognised across the world as a violinist and artist of rare quality, known at the highest level for his virtuosity, superb musicianship and the integrity of his playing. In recognition of this, he was voted Gramophone Artist of the Year 2014.

Born and brought up in Athens in a musical family, where he still lives, Kavakos's first steps as a violinist were guided by his parents. He studied at the Hellenic Conservatory with Stelios Kafantaris, one of the three important mentors in his life, together with Josef Gingold and Ferenc Rados.

By the age of 21, Leonidas Kavakos had already won three major competitions, the Sibelius Competition in 1985, and the Paganini and Naumburg competitions in 1988. This success led to his recording the original Sibelius Violin Concerto (1903/4), the first recording of this work in history. It won Gramophone Concerto of the Year Award in 1991. He was also accorded the honour of performing on the famous 'Il Cannone' Guarneri del Gesù, which belonged to Paganini.

Kavakos's international career has allowed him to develop close relationships with the world's major orchestras and conductors, such as the Berliner Philharmoniker/Rattle, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Jansons, London Symphony Orchestra/Gergiev and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig/Chailly. Kavakos also works closely with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Munich Philharmonic and Budapest Festival orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala and in the USA, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras.

Leonidas Kavakos has now established a strong profile as a conductor and has worked with the London Symphony and Boston Symphony orchestras, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Vienna Symphony, Budapest Festival, Finnish Radio Symphony and Rotterdam Philharmonic orchestras. In the forthcoming season, Kavakos will return as conductor to the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and will meet, for the first time as conductor, the Russian State Symphony and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino orchestras.

Leonidas Kavakos is an exclusive Decca Classics recording artist and his first release on the label, the complete Beethoven Violin Sonatas with Enrico Pace, resulted in the award of 'Instrumentalist of the Year' at the 2013 ECHO Klassik Awards. The duo has presented the complete cycle at New York's Carnegie Hall, Salzburg Festival, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, in Hong Kong and Shanghai and at the Beethovenfest Bonn.

Kavakos's second disc with Decca Classics (October 2013), was the Brahms Violin Concerto recorded with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Riccardo Chailly, and the third disc, Brahms Violin Sonatas with Yuja Wang, was released in spring 2014. Kavakos and Wang performed the sonatas on tour throughout Europe and in the coming season, will appear in London's Barbican Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Barcelona, Madrid, Salzburg and the Vienna Musikverein.

Following the Sibelius and other early recordings for BIS and ECM, Kavakos recorded Mozart's five Violin Concertos and Symphony No.39 in concert for Sony Classical, conducting and playing with Camerata Salzburg. He then recorded Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, again with Camerata Salzburg, for which he received an ECHO Klassik 'Best Concerto Recording' award in 2009.

Kavakos has always retained strong links with his native Greece. For 15 years he curated a chamber music cycle at the Athens Concert Hall (Megaron) which featured some of his close musical friends, including Mstislav Rostropovich, Heinrich Schiff, Emanuel Ax, Nikolai Lugansky, Yuja Wang and

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Gautier Capuçon. For the past two years Kavakos has curated an annual violin and chamber-music masterclass in Athens, attracting violinists and ensembles from all over the world and reflecting his deep commitment to the handing on of musical knowledge and traditions.

Leonidas Kavakos is passionate about the art of violin- and bow-making, both past and present, which he considers a great mystery and, to our day, an undisclosed secret. He plays the 'Abergavenny' Stradivarius violin of 1724 and owns modern violins made by F. Leonhard, S.P. Greiner, E. Haahti and D. Bague. Bows by F.X. Tourte, D. Peccatte and J.P.M. Persois are his most precious companions.

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Leonidas Kavakos is represented by Intermusica.

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