

Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst partners with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra

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The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra has been lining up increasingly high-profile artistic partnerships with internationally acclaimed musicians. The latest, announced Tuesday, is with Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst, who wowed Twin Cities audiences in October as a guest soloist with the SPCO.

The appointment, to last through the 2018-19 season, marks the first time that Fröst will take on such a leadership role outside Scandinavia.

The partnership seems poised to raise the SPCO's profile, as well, with recording, new commissions and international tours including one to East Asia. It begins in March with a three-concert residency with Fröst and the orchestra at the University of California, Berkeley.

"I feel my creative ideas will have a natural home with the orchestra, and I really look forward to having a very stimulating few years together," Fröst said in a statement. He is in the midst of developing "Genesis Project," an exploration of classical music's religious and folk origins for which the SPCO will be a principal partner, as well.

Fröst joins Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, whose first concerts with the SPCO begin Nov. 20, and four other current artistic partners. He is currently artist-in-residence with four orchestras including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and is artistic director of two Scandinavian music festivals.

Superlatives about Fröst's talent abound. SPCO President Bruce Coppock called his October concerts — which included Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, the work that inspired Fröst to choose his instrument at age 8 — "perhaps the most kinetic, awe-inspiring performances SPCO audiences have ever experienced." The New York Times called his musicianship "unsurpassed by any clarinetist — perhaps any instrumentalist — in recent memory." In 2011, he drew raves as a soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, performing Kalevi Aho's Clarinet Concerto with conductor Osmo Vänskä.

In addition to sparking unchecked enthusiasm in performance, Fröst is known for pushing traditional boundaries. In 2013, with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, he premiered his original concept "Dollhouse," a work combining music, dance and lighting effects. After recording for many years on the BIS label, he recently signed an exclusive long-term contract with Sony Classical, an arrangement that allows him to conduct as well as solo.



Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst, the SPCO's newest artistic partner.

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Martin Frost

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