

Raimo Sirkiä – tenor

Long biography

Finnish tenor Raimo Sirkiä is a dramatic tenor whose powerful, warm-timbred voice lends itself equally well to Verdi's Otello and Radames as to Wagner's Tannhäuser, Tristan and Lohengrin.

Sirkiä has been a musician since the age of four, when he began playing the accordion. He was Finnish accordion champion four years in succession and went on to master several other instruments. He studied voice at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki.

In 1981 he won the Timo Mustakallio Voice Competition and took up his first opera house engagement in Kiel, Germany, where his lyric tenor repertoire widened to include Italian spinto roles. Engagements at the Dortmund City Opera (1985–1991) and the Deutsche Oper am Rhein (1991–1996) allowed him to add all the major Italian roles, including Otello, as well as his first Wagner roles: Erik, Parsifal, Walther von Stolzing and Tristan.

From 1990 Sirkiä was a member of the Finnish National Opera ensemble. Notable roles at his home theatre included Otello, a televised Don Carlos and Siegmund in Götz Friedrich's Ring. In later years he sang Parsifal in Harry Kupfer's new production (2005), as well as Cavaradossi, Pollione, Andrea Chénier and the Emperor in Die Frau ohne Schatten.

Sirkiä has sung at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Hamburg State Opera, the operas of Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, the Semperoper Dresden, the Teatro Malibran in Venice, the Teatro Regio in Turin and the Otello Festival in Cyprus. He sang Tannhäuser in Savonlinna and Tristan at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in 1996, and Lohengrin at the Megaron in Athens in 1999. Lohengrin was also his debut role at the Bayreuth Festival in 2000.

Sirkiä has a long association with the Savonlinna Opera Festival: he has sung the major tenor roles there since 1981, was named the festival's Artist of the Year in 1996, and served as its artistic director from 2002 to 2007.

In 1993 Sirkiä was awarded the Beniamino Gigli Prize. The President of the Republic of Finland has awarded him the Pro Finlandia Medal of the Order of the Lion of Finland in 2003 and named him Commander of the Order of the Lion of Finland in 2025.

Sirkiä has been a frequent soloist with the leading Scandinavian orchestras and has recorded several complete operas, symphonic works and solo

albums. He retired from the Finnish National Opera in 2006 and has since focused on concerts and recitals and on teaching young tenors.