

Press Quotes
Beethoven Symphony No. 5 & Piano Concerto No. 4 Recording
Released February 8, 2011

“Tilson Thomas leads a forceful, nuanced account of Beethoven's Fifth that shows his San Francisco Symphony to be in prime health. But the highlight of the disc is the performance of the Fourth Piano Concerto with Ax at his most crystalline and poetic. The relationships between piano and orchestra are beautifully defined, the music's grace, drama and joy bountifully conveyed. **Grade: A**”

- [Donald Rosenberg, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*](#)

“I have not heard Beethoven interpretations as carefully thought-out or superbly played as these for ages. It has been a long time since a conductor has forced me to listen this closely during the Fifth, at least not in a reading that wants nothing to do with a historical interpretative approach... MTT does not carelessly rush through Beethoven's Fifth; he opens up the music and gives us a new insight.... The listener experiences the same good fortune in the Fourth Piano Concerto. Not only the harmony between orchestra, conductor, and soloist are impressive here but also a host of phrasings which sound completely new, particularly in the piano.... In both works, the playing of the San Francisco Symphony is simply overwhelming – the coherence of the strings, the warmth of the woodwinds, the audible enthusiasm, and the clearly perceptible determination to give new meaning to this often-played music – it is all moving!”
Awarded “The Excellentia Supersonic Award.”

- [Remy Franck, *Pizzicato \(Luxembourg\)*](#)

“With the greatest Beethoven conductors of the past century available in multiple editions, do we really need a new Beethoven series? Yes, if the performances are as compelling as this new Fifth, which is fresh and exciting, individual without being idiosyncratic. The recording is top drawer, transparent and richly detailed, as is always the case for the SFS's self-produced releases.”

- [Lawrence Johnson, *The Classical Review*](#)

“Absolutely the best-sounding recording of these two works ever issued! ... The clarity, overwhelming presence, and stunning surround sound balance must be heard to be believed... the SFS [is] sounding like the best orchestra in the world... when listening to this recording, [I] marveled many times at the sheer beauty of sound and the outstanding engineering that went into this effort. This is one honey of a recording... the heroic nature of [Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4] is not ignored, and the final passages are as exciting as any you will ever hear.”

- [Steven Ritter, *Audiophile Audition*](#)

“Michael Tilson Thomas's interpretation is free of any mannerism, but is alive in every bar, full of passion, and marvelously played and recorded.” 5 stars for performance and 5 stars for recording

– Michael Tanner, *BBC Music Magazine*

“.....First impressions of this new disc from the San Francisco Symphony are of the sheer quality of the production values. The orchestra, especially under the leadership of Michael Tilson Thomas, has a

legitimate claim to a place in the pantheon of the world's great orchestras, so their own label ought to be showing off some impressive strengths. That is exactly what happens here. The sparkling SACD audio does full justice to every section: the woodwinds are chirpy and distinct, the horns are brazen, the lower strings are given presence and weight by the strong bass response... whatever MTT is doing on the podium, he couldn't ask for a better response from his orchestra. They sound great throughout, and the audio puts them in the best possible light. Would that all orchestra own labels matched the quality of SFS Media.”

- [Gavin Dixon, *Music Web International*](#)

“...a lovely reading of the once-revolutionary work” (Of Piano Concerto No. 4)

- [Philip Campbell, *Bay Area Reporter*](#)

“Michael Tilson Thomas and our very own San Francisco Symphony have come up with an excellent performance of the most famous symphony of them all in combination with a superb rendition by Emanuel Ax of Ludwig Van’s Piano Concerto No. 4... This release is worth making some sublime noise about.”

- [Jeff Dunn, *San Francisco Classical Voice*](#)

“The San Francisco Symphony Beethoven disc should become a benchmark for future modern instrument recordings of Beethoven. The Fifth Symphony doesn’t sound new so much as right : Tilson Thomas adds very little by way of personal interpretive gestures, but he clarifies textures, provides plenty of impact, and gives us Beethoven unvarnished; his superb orchestra is inspired and the sound is excellent, particularly in 5.1 surround. The Fourth Piano Concerto is both the ideal discmate and a sparkling performance in its own right.”

- [Christopher Abbot, *Fanfare*](#)