



SAN FRANCISCO  
SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR



## Press Quotes

### Ives Concord Symphony & Copland Organ Symphony Recording

Released February 8, 2011

“To listen to "A Concord Symphony" - Charles Ives' pathbreaking "Concord" Sonata, brilliantly orchestrated by the late Henry Brant - is to feel an exhilarating sense of discovery and dramatic vigor, an explosive dynamism that emanates from all the participants. Ives' music, first of all, retains its distinctive combination of pugnacious bluster and sentimental lyricism in this new guise, while adding a layer of world-embracing ambition that is unique to the symphonic tradition. Brant's orchestral palette is never less than ingenious, but there's a sense of Promethean struggle audible in his efforts that fits perfectly with Ives' late-Romantic mind-set. Finally, Thomas and the orchestra, recorded live in Davies Symphony Hall, convey every bit of the score's boisterous vitality in a performance of magnificent virtuosity - it's a landmark achievement. Copland's Organ Symphony, with soloist Paul Jacobs, also gets a majestic reading.”

- [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle](#)

“There is no finer conductor of Ives or Copland today than Michael Tilson Thomas, and it's so fulfilling to see him doing what he does best on the San Francisco Symphony's own label... Davies Symphony Hall has a spectacular organ that's very well captured by the engineers. Paul Jacobs plays beautifully; his instrument "fits" into the general sonic framework very naturally, while Thomas and the orchestra play as if to the manner born. A great disc.”

- [David Hurwitz, Classics Today.com](#)

Regarding Copland's Organ Symphony: “...Paul Jacobs faultlessly exploits this fine score. With this degree of drama, eloquence and style, it's the ideal recording of this incomprehensively neglected work...these two recordings are a stunning success”

- Peter Dickinson, *Gramophone*

“This recording, from live performances by Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, is both more mercurial and more lush than the symphony's previous recording (Dennis Russell Davies conducting the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, on Innova). It works beautifully, every note haloed with romantic polish. It's paired with an ironically elegant reading of Aaron Copland's early, cheeky bad-boy "Organ Symphony" (with organist Paul Jacobs). But Ives's fine immensities echo the strongest.”

- [Matthew Guerrieri, Boston Globe](#)

“The solid musicianship of Paul Jacobs and that of Thomas, who is perhaps the most dedicated interpreter of twentieth-century American music since Leonard Bernstein, ensures that this is one of the more successful recordings of this often problematic work...Jacobs deftly brings out the "jazzy" harmonies in the left hand in a solo episode of the scherzo—how Bernstein would have rejoiced to have had him, instead of the staid but rhythmically exact E. Power Biggs, as a collaborator in this work!... This San Francisco Symphony release, the first of two this month (the other being devoted to Beethoven), is an exceptionally valuable addition to the ever-growing discography of American music.”

- [Chris Hathawy, KUHF, Houston Public Radio](#)

“The real knockout is the companion piece, Aaron Copland's Organ Symphony, written when he was 23 and banging down the Modernist doors with his jazziness and serious contemplation. The performance, with Paul Jacobs as organist, is brilliant.”

- [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times Culture Monster blog post](#)

"The quirky beauty of Ives' music emerges in all its radical and nostalgic glory as played by Tilson Thomas and company. Aaron Copland's noble Organ Symphony also grips the ears with organist Jacobs providing subtle and grand colors. Grade: A"

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

"[Michael Tilson Thomas] is unequaled as an interpreter of Ives' music"

- [Mark Kanny, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review](#)

"Henry Brant's "A Concord Symphony" -- his orchestration of Charles Ives' "Concord" Sonata for piano -- is an American masterpiece, which MTT & Co. grab by the throat. Even more cogent and arrestingly beautiful is Copland's Organ Symphony, delivered like a pronouncement from the mountain top. Paul Jacobs is soloist. [One of the] Best classical albums of 2011"

- [Rich Scheinin, San Jose Mercury News](#)

"... Rather than trying to imitate the complex layers and dark palette of Ives's actual orchestral music, [arranger] Brant instead opts for clarity and brilliance, which Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony offer in spades... The live recording [of Copland's Organ Symphony] is absolutely stunning, with the organ clearly spaced in Davies Hall, allowing Paul Jacobs to be in the foreground, and yet an integral part of the orchestra, as the composer intended." 5 stars for performance and 5 stars for recording

Howard Goldstein, *BBC Music Magazine*

"This Hybrid SACD recording delivers all the powerful energy of the music, with plenty of room to spare. Two rarities of this calibre on the same CD is what I would classify as a definite must-have!"

- [Jean-Yves Duperron, Classical Music Setinel](#) (Canada)

"It would have been a sin and a shame had this glorious undertaking not been archived. To have it in a performance of such majesty and obvious commitment is a treasure. If this doesn't finally vindicate MTT's championing of the great American maverick composer, nothing ever will...Mahler thought the symphony should embrace the world, and it is clear Ives (and Brant) shared his opinion. How perfect it is to have this release, so soon after the Mahler Cycle."

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

"SF Symphony Triumphs with Ives' Concord Symphony...The performance is, even for this orchestra, extraordinary. Everyone seems to have invested both energy and care — by which I don't mean caution, but minute attention. It's both remarkably intense and remarkably clean playing .... The solo woodwind playing, of which there's naturally quite a lot, is particularly fine."

- [Michelle Dulak Thomson, San Francisco Classical Voice](#)

"...the SF Symphony meets [Ives' Concord Symphony's] extraordinary challenges beautifully... MTT engaged in some ingenious programming by pairing the *Concord* with Aaron Copland's *Organ Symphony*... The Ruffatti organ in the SF Symphony's hall sounds superb and the mix of organ and orchestral sound is gloriously reproduced by the 5.0-channel hi-res surround of the SACD."

- [John Sunier, Audiophile Audition](#)

"Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, with organist Paul Jacobs in the Copland, give stunning renditions of these works."

- [Bob McQuiston, NPR.org "Deceptive Cadence" blog](#)

"This is a truly essential disc of two American works that, when all is said and done, have seen few Recordings...They have pulled off an unqualified success!"

- [Michel Tibbaut, \*Resmusica\* \(France\)](#)

"Now, Tilson Thomas is in the prime of his career, in music by composers for whom he has become our most important advocate, he has no peer."

- Christopher Abbot, *Fanfare*

"Regarding the recording of Copland's Organ Symphony: "It's difficult to imagine a finer performance than this one, with a mighty solo instrument and the orchestra beautifully balanced against each other"

- Malcom Hayes, *Classic FM*

"The orchestra can display all its strengths in this music - precision, flawless technique, and a specifically American style of playing which does justice to this work with its sudden about-faces and stylistic mix that is a bit reminiscent of film music. The fact that the San Francisco Symphony is able to reproduce all the different moods adequately illustrates its great flexibility."

- SWR 2 German Public Radio aired Feb 26, 2011

"...powerful, intense, colourful, vivid. With the expansive sound of his San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas is the ideal champion of [Ives' Concord Symphony.]"

- [Crescendo Classic](#) (Germany)

"Tilson Thomas's intense belief in Brant's – and Ives's – achievement comes through in every bar of this recording, the first of two releases on the San Francisco orchestra's in-house label to branch out from the Mahler symphonies that brought it worldwide attention."

- John von Rhein, [The Classical Review](#)

"The Charles Ives discography (as well as MTT's) received a significant addition, courtesy of Henry Brant's fascinating arrangement of the seminal "Concord" Sonata. The highly original Copland piece that accompanies the Ives is the icing on a very nourishing cake.

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

"Brant's transcription is masterful and highly imaginative. ...The result could hardly be in more capable hands than those of Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, both of whom have an outstanding record of support for contemporary American music... The disc also includes Aaron Copland's Organ Symphony of 1925... Organist Paul Jacobs delivers a knockout performance of this intriguing and surprisingly intimate work. Superlative SACD quality sound throughout makes this disc a must-have item."

- [John Foley, \*The Whole Note\*](#) (Canada)