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(Images of Gustavo Dudamel, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Alan Gilbert are available for download in the [Photo Library](#))

THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY LAUNCHES AMERICAN ORCHESTRA FORUM WITH SIX MAJOR VISITING U.S. ORCHESTRAS, OPENING NATIONAL DIALOGUE ABOUT 21ST CENTURY ORCHESTRAS

Michael Tilson Thomas, Gustavo Dudamel, and Alan Gilbert are keynote speakers in free public events in Davies Symphony Hall preceding concerts during American Orchestra Series in SF Symphony's 2011-12 Centennial Season

SAN FRANCISCO, September 29, 2011 – The [San Francisco Symphony](http://www.sfsymphony.org) (SFS) today announced that it will host a season-long, nationwide dialogue on the 21st century American orchestra, in conjunction with the visits of six other major American orchestras during its Centennial 2011-12 season. San Francisco Symphony Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT), Los Angeles Philharmonic Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, and New York Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert are the keynote speakers for three free events in Davies Symphony Hall during the season. The San Francisco Symphony has also launched an *American Orchestra Forum* website at <http://www.symphonforum.org>, as a hub for the ongoing conversation, with perspectives from leaders in and outside the orchestra world, as well as the general public, via blogs, podcasts and videos of the discussions.

The presence of seven of America's leading orchestras—Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco—performing as part of the SF Symphony's 2011-2012 Centennial Season offers a unique opportunity to explore significant questions facing American orchestras.

"In the orchestral world, we spend a lot of time talking about music," said Brent Assink, SFS Executive Director. "In this centennial season, with the leading orchestras in the country coming to San Francisco, it's a perfect opportunity to also reflect on the connection points around the music – our communities, our creative inspirations and challenges, and, of course, our audiences. What does our past teach us? And how do we best shape our collective future? I look forward to lively discussions throughout the season."

Gustavo Dudamel's keynote conversation Sunday, October 23, "Talking About Community," kicks off a two-concert residency of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Davies Symphony Hall October 23 and 24. Michael Tilson Thomas and Assink open a discussion of creativity on Saturday, March 17, 2012, in conjunction with

San Francisco Symphony's month-long *American Mavericks* festival of adventurous American music. Alan Gilbert initiates a discussion on the role of live music in a world of changing audience habits Sunday, May 13, and leads the New York Philharmonic for two concerts May 13 and 14. Composers John Adams and Mason Bates take part in a conversation and discussion following the MTT keynote during the American Mavericks festival event March 17.

Other participants in the forums include SF Symphony musicians; leaders in the classical music field, including the League of American Orchestras; scholars from Stanford University and the University of Chicago, as well as those in private enterprise, including executives from Silicon Valley technology firms and Major League Baseball. San Francisco-based cultural critic and journalist Steven Winn and University of Michigan musicologist Mark Clague will co-moderate the forums and host the podcasts.

Uniting the content of the public forums with ongoing dialogue will be the [American Orchestra Forum](http://www.symphonyforum.org) website, www.symphonyforum.org. Over the course of the year, the website will host blogs, video interviews, transcripts, and podcasts to help stimulate conversation about the state of American orchestras among global audiences. The events in San Francisco will be live blogged.

Topics to be explored in the free public forums, and online, will include how orchestras connect with their communities, bridging multiple cultures; how new ways of producing music are shaping listening habits, and vice versa; how orchestras balance creativity and innovation with artistic traditions; and how orchestras can learn from companies and organizations outside the classical music world as they work to meet the challenge of attracting and involving new and changing audiences.

The League of American Orchestras, the professional association for American orchestras, is a project partner, promoting a national dialogue around topics addressed in the *American Orchestra Forum*. A session regarding the *American Orchestra Forum* project will be part of the League of American Orchestras' 2012 conference in Dallas.

The *American Orchestra Forum* is generously supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

AMERICAN ORCHESTRA FORUM: Talking About Community

Sunday, October 23, 2-5 p.m.
Davies Symphony Hall
201 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco

Please note: This three-hour event is comprised of multiple sessions, with breaks in between.

Program: How have orchestras adapted to serve and respond to changing communities? How has the role of the orchestra as a civic partner in education evolved in the past century? What is an orchestra's responsibility to its home city?

Spotlight #1: Jesse Rosen, President/CEO, League of American Orchestras, in conversation with Neil Harris, Professor of History and Art History, University of Chicago; moderated by Mark Clague, professor of music, University of Michigan.

Spotlight #2: Amos Yang, Assistant Principal Cellist, San Francisco Symphony, and alumnus, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra; in conversation with Afa Sadykhly Dworkin, Artistic Director, Sphinx Organization, Detroit; moderated by journalist Steven Winn

Roundtable discussion: Spotlight speakers, with Mark Clague and Steven Winn

Keynote Conversation: Gustavo Dudamel, Music Director, Los Angeles Philharmonic and alumnus, El Sistema, Venezuela, in conversation with Deborah Borda, President and CEO, Los Angeles Philharmonic Association (**Note: Dudamel's appearance will begin at approximately 4:30**)

Tickets: These events are free; no tickets are required. Advance registration is recommended at www.symphonyforum.org.

Concert tickets: The Los Angeles Philharmonic performs October 23 and October 24 at Davies Symphony Hall; limited tickets sold separately at www.sfsymphony.org.

AMERICAN ORCHESTRA FORUM: Talking About Creativity

Saturday, March 17, 2012, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Davies Symphony Hall
201 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco

Please note: This three-hour program is comprised of multiple sessions, with breaks in between.

Program: How do orchestras balance tradition and innovation? How has changing technology shaped how artists think about music, how they are trained, and how we experience it? How do classically trained musicians and composers straddle genres? What have been some of the unique contributions of the Bay Area to musical creativity?

Keynote Conversation: Michael Tilson Thomas, Music Director, San Francisco Symphony, in conversation with Brent Assink, Executive Director, San Francisco Symphony

Spotlight #1: Mason Bates, composer, in conversation with John Adams, composer, moderated by Mark Clague

Spotlight #2: Margo Drakos, cellist and chief operating officer, InstantEncore, in conversation with special guest TBA; moderated by Steven Winn

Roundtable discussion: Spotlight speakers with Mark Clague and Steven Winn

Tickets: These events are free; no tickets are required. Advance registration is recommended at www.symphonyforum.org.

Concert tickets: The San Francisco Symphony performs the world premieres March 15 through March 17 of John Adams' *Absolute Jest* and Mason Bates' *Mass Transmission* with pianist Emanuel Ax and the St. Lawrence String Quartet as part of the *American Mavericks* festival; tickets sold separately at www.sfsymphony.org

AMERICAN ORCHESTRA FORUM: Talking About Audiences

Sunday, May 13, 2012, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Davies Symphony Hall
201 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco

Please note: This three-hour program is comprised of multiple sessions, with breaks in between.

Program: The audience experience at an orchestra concert is steeped in tradition. How can the art form evolve with changing social norms without changing its very essence? How has the way the audience participates in a live music experience changed, and how should it influence our future? Are there models outside performing arts that can inform our choices?

Keynote Conversation: Alan Gilbert, Music Director, New York Philharmonic, in conversation with Mark Clague

Spotlight #1: Sunil Iyengar, Director of Research & Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts, in conversation with Elizabeth Scott, VP, Major League Baseball Productions, and conductor; moderated by Mark Clague

Spotlight #2: Jonathan Berger, composer and professor of music, Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, Stanford University in conversation with special guest TBA; moderated by Steven Winn

Roundtable: Spotlight speakers with Mark Clague and Steven Winn

Tickets: These events are free; no tickets are required. Advance registration is recommended at <http://www.symphonyforum.org>.

Concert tickets: The New York Philharmonic performs May 13 and 14 at Davies Symphony Hall; tickets sold separately at www.sfsymphony.org.



The American Orchestra Forum is generously supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.