



SAN FRANCISCO  
SYMPHONY  
MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

100 YEARS

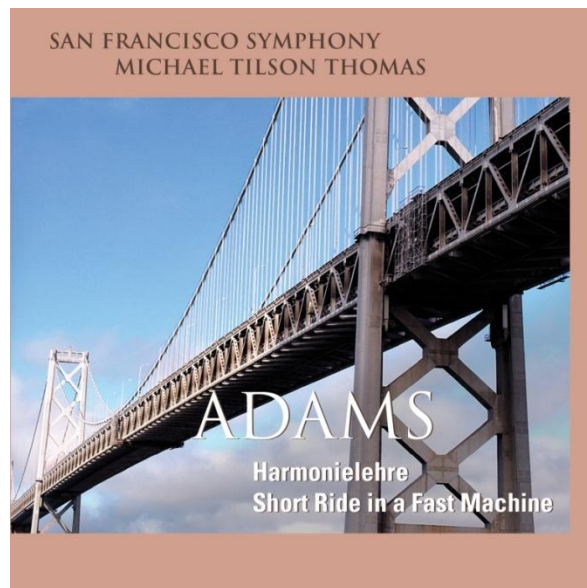
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** / January 23, 2012



**MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS AND THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY RELEASE  
RECORDING OF JOHN ADAMS' *HARMONIELEHRE* AND  
*SHORT RIDE IN A FAST MACHINE* ON SFS MEDIA MARCH 13, 2012**

**Exclusive pre-release download from iTunes available February 15**

**SAN FRANCISCO, January 23, 2012** —Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT) and the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) will release a hybrid SACD recording of works by John Adams in conjunction with its month-long *American Mavericks* Festival in March 2012. Self-produced on the Orchestra's SFS Media label, the recording features the SFS commission *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, a work commissioned by MTT. The recording will be available for pre-release by download exclusively from Apple's iTunes Music Store beginning February 15, the composer's birthday. The San Francisco Symphony's e-store is currently accepting pre-sale orders for the Adams recording at [sfsymphony.org/store](http://sfsymphony.org/store) and on February 15 it will become available at the Symphony Store in Davies Symphony Hall. National and international retail release for the recording will be March 13. On March 15, MTT leads the SFS in world premiere of *Absolute Jest*, a new work by Adams commissioned for its centennial season, with additional performances in Chicago, Ann Arbor and Carnegie Hall.

The SFS commissioned, premiered and recorded *Harmonielehre* in March 1985 under Edo De Waart during Adams' tenure as SFS composer in residence. Adams recalled, "I was a young composer when I wrote *Harmonielehre* and I had really only written two other orchestra pieces at that point and one of them was *Harmonium*, which was premiered by the San Francisco Symphony only a few years before that. *Harmonielehre* was tough coming out... I was searching for what I wanted to say. I knew that part of what I wanted to write for the orchestra was a music that would kind of strum the strings of its repertoire that would play to its strengths... [with *Harmonielehre*] I really confronted who I was, who I am, John Adams as a composer - somebody who grew up listening to classical music, classical orchestral music, who played in orchestras when I was younger, who conducted, who loved that repertoire, but at the same time was somebody who also grew up listening to jazz and rock and who was very influenced by minimalism. So it's this rather strange marriage of the driving pulse of American minimalism and the sensuous and emotional and expressive world of the great European masterpieces."

Michael Tilson Thomas, who conducted the work during his first season as SFS Music Director in 1995 and multiple times since, said of the work, "When a new piece is premiered, it can make a stunning impression. But the real story of that piece is what emerges over time. When the SFS first performed *Harmonielehre* in the mid-80s it was a life changing moment for everybody who heard it. I heard it first on the recording and I was drawn into the piece in so many ways, its enormous power, but also its tenderness and depth of expression. And now, decades later, the piece still stands up."

MTT commissioned *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* from John Adams in 1986 for a Pittsburgh Symphony performance in Massachusetts. Adams shared, "Michael called me back in 1986 when he was opening a new music festival in Massachusetts with the Pittsburgh Symphony and he asked me to do a fanfare. The sort of traditional fanfare with blaring trumpets didn't really appeal to me, and how do you write a fanfare when Copland has already done it so well? I thought about it and for some reason the connection with Cape Cod came to mind. Years before that I had been there with a former brother-in-law and he had asked me at about 1 in the morning if I would like to take a ride with him in his Lamborghini. I did and once he started up I wished I hadn't because he drove very, very fast. The idea of a piece that had that combination of excitement and thrill and was just on the edge of anxiety or terror was the motivating force for [*Short Ride in a Fast Machine*.] The piece starts with the click of the wood block and that wood block never changes, it just keeps driving and it's sort of like a gauntlet through which a 100-piece orchestra has to pass."

In September 2011 MTT and the San Francisco Symphony capped their Centennial Season Opening Gala program with an orchestral and multimedia performance of *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*. This performance will be screened on PBS's *Great Performances* on March 30.

One of America's most admired and respected composers, John Adams has enjoyed a strong relationship with the San Francisco Symphony for more than 30 years. Adams was appointed contemporary music adviser to the San Francisco Symphony in 1979 and composer-in-residence between 1982 and 1985, a tenure which helped set the precedent for composer residencies at orchestras around the world. The creative relationship between the SF Symphony and John Adams has been extraordinarily productive: since 1981 the SFS has performed 22 of his works, six of which were SFS commissions. The Orchestra has performed six world premieres of Adams' music and four U.S. premieres, most recently the March 2007 U.S. premiere of his opera [A Flowering Tree](#), a San Francisco Symphony co-commission. On March 15 at Davies Symphony Hall the Orchestra will perform the world premiere of *Absolute Jest*, a new work by Adams it commissioned for its centennial season. The work is

based on fragments of Beethoven scherzos, and features the St. Lawrence String Quartet. John Adams' writings and more about his work can be enjoyed on his website, [earbox.com](http://earbox.com).

Over the course of the *American Mavericks* Festival in 2012 three more works will be recorded for future release on SFS Media: Lou Harrison's Concerto for Organ with Percussion Orchestra featuring Paul Jacobs on March 8 and 9, Carl Ruggles' *Sun-treader*, and Henry Cowell's Piano Concerto with Jeremy Denk on March 10 and 14.

All SFS Media recordings are available from the Symphony Store in Davies Symphony Hall and online at [sfsymphony.org/store](http://sfsymphony.org/store) as well as other major retailers. The recordings can also be purchased as downloads from iTunes and Amazon and other digital outlets. SFS Media recordings are distributed by Harmonia Mundi in the U.S., SRI Canada, IODA digitally and Avie internationally.

**Title:** Adams: *Harmonielehre*, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*  
**Composer:** John Adams (1947-)  
**Artists:** Michael Tilson Thomas, Conductor  
San Francisco Symphony  
**Recorded:** *Harmonielehre* recorded live at Davies Symphony Hall December 8-11, 2010  
*Short Ride in a Fast Machine* recorded at the San Francisco Symphony's Centennial Season Opening Gala on September 7, 2011.  
**Label:** SFS Media  
**Catalogue Number:** SFS0053  
**Release Date:** March 13, 2012  
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SRI Canada (Canada)  
Avie (International)  
IODA (Digitally)  
Online: [sfsymphony.org/store](http://sfsymphony.org/store)  
**Media copies:** If members of the press would like a copy of the recording for review, please contact Shuman Associates at [shumanpr@shumanassociates.net](mailto:shumanpr@shumanassociates.net) or Louisa Spier at [lspier@sfsymphony.org](mailto:lspier@sfsymphony.org).

