



**SAN FRANCISCO
SYMPHONY**

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

Contact:

Public Relations

San Francisco Symphony

(415) 503-5474

publicrelations@sfsymphony.org

sfsymphony.org/press

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / July 13, 2016



(High resolution images of Steve Reich and Michael Tilson Thomas are available for download from the San Francisco Symphony's [Online Photo Library](#))

**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY AND MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS ANNOUNCE DETAILS OF
WEEK-LONG CELEBRATION HONORING COMPOSER STEVE REICH'S 80TH BIRTHDAY
SEPTEMBER 7–11, 2016 AT DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL**

Opening Night Gala Concert Features Reich's Three Movements (Sept. 7)

Two Additional Concerts Feature Three Movements and Double Sextet (Sept. 9–10)

CELEBRATION CULMINATES WITH *STEVE REICH: AN AMERICAN MAVERICK*

Sunday, September 11, 2016

**All-Reich Program Features members of the San Francisco Symphony with Special Guests
Kronos Quartet, Eighth Blackbird, Derek Johnson,
and Percussion Students from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 13 – The San Francisco Symphony (SFS) and Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT) celebrate the 80th birthday of Steve Reich with a diverse week of concerts highlighting the seminal composer's works September 7–11, 2016 at Davies Symphony Hall. The week-long celebration begins with the Orchestra's Opening Night Gala on September 7 highlighted by a performance of Reich's Three Movements. Subsequent concerts on September 9–10 feature that work alongside the composer's Double Sextet performed by contemporary chamber ensemble Eighth Blackbird side-by-side with SFS musicians. Double Sextet will be a first SFS performance. The celebration culminates on September 11 with *Steve Reich: An American Maverick*, a special birthday celebration in honor of the composer's

extraordinary musical contributions. Members of the SFS are joined by percussion students from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for Reich's Six Marimbas; guitarist Derek Johnson performs *Electric Counterpoint* with pre-recorded audio; the San Francisco-based string ensemble Kronos Quartet performs the composer's *WTC 9/11*, which was written specifically for them along with pre-recorded spoken voice; and frequent Reich collaborators Eighth Blackbird join with SFS musicians for the composer's Double Sextet. MTT conducts and hosts the evening and Steve Reich will be in attendance.

A pioneer of the Minimalist movement, Steve Reich grew up in New York and California, moving to the Bay Area in the 1960s to study with Luciano Berio and Darius Milhaud at Mills College and joining with other electronic composers in the exploration of the tape music medium at the San Francisco Tape Music Center. Some of Reich's earliest compositions, as well as the beginnings of his widely influential work with recorded spoken word and tape looping, were created during his time in the Bay Area.

Now in the sixth decade of his career, Steve Reich is respected as one of the most influential composers alive. His work has been performed in concert halls around the globe, and is frequently cited as a source of inspiration by diverse musicians such as Stephen Sondheim, Jonny Greenwood (of Radiohead), Mason Bates, Sufjan Stevens, as well as generations of electronic musicians and DJs.

Michael Tilson Thomas has championed the avant-garde composer's works since discovering Steve Reich's music in the 1960s. He has programmed Reich's compositions in performances by major symphony orchestras around the world including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphony, and has conducted premieres and first recordings of *Three Movements*, *The Four Sections*, and *The Desert Music*. In 2000, MTT invited Steve Reich and Musicians to participate in two all-Reich performances of *Music for 18 Musicians*, *Three Tales*, and the West Coast premiere of *Act I: Hindenburg* as a part of the pioneering American Mavericks Festival. MTT and the SFS also performed the West Coast premiere of *City Life* and the world premiere of *For Strings, with Winds and Brass*. In recent years, the Orchestra has continued to creatively highlight the composer's work including performances of his *Music for Pieces of Wood* in San Francisco and on tour as a part of the 2012 American Mavericks Festival, and in the inaugural SoundBox program curated by MTT in 2014.

"Steve has given us so much joy in music," comments Michael Tilson Thomas. "When I first heard his music, I was taken aback because it was so unique—both beautiful and confrontational, entirely different from other 'avant-garde' music I knew. It had beautiful notes in shifting layers of time that made ever changing melodies. It was elating and somehow spiritual."

"When I first took Steve's music to Carnegie Hall in the 70s, the audience booed," MTT adds. "Forty years later, his work is beloved and included on our Opening Gala program. To see his music take this journey and cross the bridge from jeers to core repertory for adventurous American orchestras is gratifying to say the least. Steve and I have been friends and colleagues for many years now, and today his radiant music reflects a lifetime of inspiration and determination."

About Steve Reich

Raised in New York and California, Steve Reich studied composition with Hall Overton, William Bergsma, and Vincent Persichetti at The Juilliard School, and Luciano Berio and Darius Milhaud at Mills College. In 1966, he founded his own ensemble of three musicians, which rapidly grew to 18 members or more. Since 1971, Steve Reich and Musicians have frequently toured the world and have the distinction of performing to sold-out houses at venues as diverse as Carnegie Hall and The Bottom Line. In 1994, Reich was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, followed by the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts in 1995. He was awarded the Commandeur de l'ordre des Arts et Lettres in 1999, with four additional honors in 2000 from Columbia University, Dartmouth College, University of California at Berkeley, and the California Institute of the Arts. In 2007, Reich was awarded the Polar Music Prize by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. In 2009, he won his first-ever Pulitzer Prize for *Double Sextet* (2007). In 2014, Reich was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Music from the Venice Biennale.

About Kronos Quartet

For over 40 years, San Francisco's Kronos Quartet—David Harrington (violin), John Sherba (violin), Hank Dutt (viola), and Sunny Yang (cello)—has combined a spirit of fearless exploration with a commitment to continually reimagining the string quartet experience. In the process, Kronos has become one of the world's most celebrated and influential ensembles,

performing thousands of concerts worldwide, releasing more than 50 recordings, collaborating with many of the world's most eclectic composers and performers, and commissioning more than 850 works and arrangements for string quartet. A Grammy winner, Kronos is also the only recipient of both the Polar Music Prize and the Avery Fisher Prize. With a staff of 10, the nonprofit Kronos Performing Arts Association (KPAA) manages all aspects of Kronos's work, including the commissioning of new works, concert tours, home-season performances, and education programs. Last season, Kronos launched a five-year initiative called *Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire*. Commissioned from an international group of composers (25 women and 25 men), this eclectic collection of 50 new works is devoted to the most contemporary approaches to the string quartet, designed expressly for the training of students and emerging professionals. Scores, instructional videos, recordings, and other materials are available online for free.

About Eighth Blackbird

The Chicago-based, three-time Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird has provoked and impressed audiences for 20 years across the country and around the world with impeccable precision and a signature style. One of the industry's most formidable ensembles, eighth blackbird began in 1996 as a group of six entrepreneurial Oberlin Conservatory students. Over the course of two decades, the ensemble has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by dozens of composers, including David T. Little, Steven Mackey, Missy Mazzoli, and Steve Reich, whose commissioned work, *Double Sextet*, went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 2009. A long-term relationship with Chicago's Cedille Records has produced six acclaimed recordings, including three Grammy Awards for *strange imaginary animals* (2008), *Lonely Motel: Music from Slide* (2011), and *meanwhile* (2013). The group's mission extends beyond performance to curation and education. The ensemble served as music director of the Ojai Music Festival (2009), enjoyed a three-year residency at the Curtis Institute of Music, and holds ongoing ensemble-in-residence positions at the University of Richmond and the University of Chicago. Eighth Blackbird's members hail from the Great Lakes, Keystone, Golden Empire, and Bay states. The name "Eighth Blackbird" derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens's evocative, aphoristic poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."

About Derek Johnson

Derek Johnson is a composer, electric guitarist, and educator active in the world of contemporary concert music and beyond. Born and raised at the majestic base of the Rocky Mountains in Boulder, Colorado, Derek began his college training as an electric guitarist at Columbia College Chicago and completed graduate degrees (DM/MM) in composition at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is a founding member of the virtuoso chamber ensemble BASILICA and a frequent collaborator with singer/songwriter Christian Taylor. Johnson has performed internationally with the powerhouse new music ensemble the Bang On A Can All-Stars in collaboration with guest artists Iva Bittova, Tyondai Braxton, Don Byron, Dan Deacon, Bryce Dessner (The National), Bill Frisell, Phillip Glass, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Glenn Kotche (Wilco), Lee Ranaldo (Sonic Youth), Steve Reich, Ryuichi Sakamoto, and Nick Zammuto (The Books). Deeply engaged in the emerging position of the electric guitar in concert music, Derek is active as both a soloist and chamber musician presenting the rich and steadily growing canon of works written specifically for the electric guitar. His compositions have been performed throughout the United States and Canada by leading soloists and ensembles including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW and Montreal's Nouvel Ensemble Moderne. He has served as a faculty member in the music department of Columbia College Chicago, as an associate instructor of composition at Indiana University's Jacob School of Music, and as chamber music faculty at the Bang On A Can Summer Institute. He is currently an assistant professor of music theory and composition at the Ball State University School of Music, and is the director of the BSU Electric Guitar Quartet / Ensemble AMP.

About San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Founded in 1917, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music is the oldest conservatory in the American West and has earned an international reputation for producing musicians of the highest caliber. Notable alumni include Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern, conductor and pianist Jeffrey Kahane, soprano Elza van den Heever, Blue Bottle Coffee founder James Freeman and Ronald Losby, President, Steinway & Sons-Americas, among others. The Conservatory offers its approximately 400 collegiate students fully accredited bachelor's and master's degree programs in composition and instrumental and vocal performance. SFCM was the first institution of its kind to offer world-class graduate degree programs in chamber music and classical guitar. Its Pre-College Division provides exceptionally high standards of musical training and personal attention to more than 200 younger students. Conservatory faculty and students give nearly 500 public performances each year, most of which are free. Its community outreach programs serve more than 1,600 school children and more than 6,000 members of the wider community who are otherwise unable to hear live performances.

Calendar editors, please note:

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY 2016 OPENING NIGHT GALA

Wednesday, September 7 at 8 pm

Michael Tilson Thomas conductor
Renée Fleming soprano
Susan Graham mezzo-soprano
San Francisco Symphony

STEVE REICH	Three Movements
TBA	Selection of American songs
ROSSINI	Overture from <i>William Tell</i>
ROSSINI	Ballet Music from <i>William Tell</i> [first SFS performance]
TBA	Selection of Italian songs

Concert tickets are \$180 and \$300 and include a complimentary pre-concert wine reception, as well as access to the after-party in the Tent Pavilion. For information about Opening Night dinner packages, visit sfsymphony.org/gala.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY PRESENTS REICH AND COPLAND MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTING

Friday, September 9 and Saturday, September 10 at 8 pm

Michael Tilson Thomas conductor
Susannah Phillips, soprano
Eighth Blackbird, ensemble
San Francisco Symphony

COPLAND	<i>Billy the Kid</i> Suite
COPLAND	Selection of American songs
Steve REICH	Double Sextet <i>Eighth Blackbird, ensemble</i> <i>Members of the San Francisco Symphony</i>
STEVE REICH	Three Movements

Tickets: \$15-\$162.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY PRESENTS STEVE REICH: AN AMERICAN MAVERICK MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTING

Sunday, September 11 at 7 pm

Davies Symphony Hall
201 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA

Michael Tilson Thomas, host
Kronos Quartet, string quartet
Eighth Blackbird, ensemble
Derek Johnson, guitar

**Students of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Members of the San Francisco Symphony**

Steve REICH Six Marimbas
Jake Nissly, percussion
Jack Van Geem, percussion
Trey Wyatt, percussion
Students of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Steve REICH *Electric Counterpoint*
Derek Johnson, guitar

Steve REICH WTC 9/11
Kronos Quartet, string quartet

Steve REICH Double Sextet
Eighth Blackbird, ensemble
Members of the San Francisco Symphony

Tickets: \$15-\$94.

Pre-Order Food and Drinks: Concertgoers may pre-order drinks and snacks [here](#) by 11am the day of a performance to arrange to have them ready at Davies Symphony Hall either before the concert or at intermission.

Tickets are available at sfsymphony.org, by phone at 415-864-6000, and at the Davies Symphony Hall Box Office, on Grove Street between Van Ness Avenue and Franklin Street in San Francisco.

Connect with the San Francisco Symphony on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Tumblr](#), and [Instagram](#):



The San Francisco Symphony receives support from over 10,000 individual donors and 150 partner institutions.

This concert is part of a series of concerts celebrating Masters of American Music that are generously supported by David and Roberta Elliott.

Emirates is the Official Airline of the San Francisco Symphony.

San Francisco Chronicle / SFGATE.com is the Official Media Partner of the San Francisco Symphony.