



**SAN FRANCISCO  
SYMPHONY**

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Mark C. Hanson. Photo ©Oliver Theil

(High resolution images of Mark Hanson are available for download from the San Francisco Symphony's [Online Press Room](#))

## **MARK C. HANSON NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – San Francisco Symphony (SFS) President Sakurako Fisher, on behalf of the Board of Governors, and Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, today announced the appointment of Mark C. Hanson as Executive Director of the San Francisco Symphony (SFS). Hanson will succeed Brent Assink, who stepped down from the position in March 2017 after 18 years as the Orchestra's chief administrator. Hanson will begin his new post September 1.

Mark Hanson joins the San Francisco Symphony from the Houston Symphony, where he has served as Executive Director and CEO since 2010. During his time at the helm of Houston's largest performing arts organization, Hanson spearheaded visionary artistic projects, built deep and meaningful connections throughout the local community, creatively expanded the Symphony's audience and donor base, and effectively sparked collaboration between the organization's many working parts.

"I am delighted to welcome Mark Hanson as the San Francisco Symphony's next Executive Director," stated SFS President Sakurako Fisher. "Mark is an inspiring leader and the board could not be more confident in his ability to build on the Orchestra's legacy while forging new paths and possibilities of what the orchestral experience can be. I have always felt that our next leader would need to be someone who is a connector, who dissolves walls, and who builds shared values. Mark's impressive track record of innovation and success make him a natural fit as we look to broaden the connections we offer to our music and to our community. His strong blend of leadership, passion, and experience will move our shared vision for innovation and excellence forward to ensure that we impact the lives of those around us through the power of music."

As Executive Director, Hanson will lead the San Francisco Symphony— widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the U.S.—in close collaboration with the Board of Governors and Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. Celebrating 22 years of partnership, MTT and the SFS are a leading presence among American orchestras at home and around the world, celebrated for their artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. The Orchestra presents more than 220 concerts and presentations annually for an audience of nearly 450,000 in its home of Davies Symphony Hall and through its active national and international touring. A cornerstone of the organization's mission, the San Francisco Symphony's education programs are the most extensive offered by any American orchestra today, providing free comprehensive music education to every first- through fifth-grade student in the San Francisco public schools, and serving more than 100,000 children, students, educators, and families annually. Hanson becomes only the fifth Executive Director of the San Francisco Symphony since 1939, when the organization created its top management position (Howard Skinner served from 1939 to 1964, Joseph Scafidi from 1965 to 1978, Peter Pastreich from 1978 to 1999, and Brent Assink from 1999 to 2017).

"I am deeply honored to have been selected as the San Francisco Symphony's next Executive Director," commented Mark Hanson. "I have such a deep respect and admiration for the San Francisco Symphony's record of artistic accomplishment, thoughtful innovation, community engagement and economic impact achieved over its first 105 years. I look forward to working closely with Sakurako Fisher, Michael Tilson Thomas, and the Orchestra's musicians, board, and staff to build upon that exemplary legacy, keep the Orchestra at the forefront of the American arts scene, and more-widely introduce its programs to the entire Bay Area. My family and I are also eager to make the San Francisco Bay Area our home and to begin building meaningful relationships with members of the community."

"I am delighted to welcome Mark Hanson to the San Francisco Symphony family," said Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. "His excitement about the future of symphonic music, his experience and success working with other orchestras, and his enthusiasm and knowledge of music and musicians will be a major part of the next chapter of our Orchestra. At the San Francisco Symphony, we have built a strong foundation of virtuosity, adventure, curiosity, and risk taking. The Orchestra, in many ways, mirrors the personality of the city it represents. I know Mark shares these values and I very much look forward to working with him as we all build on these meaningful qualities."

"During the search process, it became very clear that Mark would be the perfect partner to build upon the extraordinary artistic growth the Orchestra has achieved in the past twenty years," said Catherine Payne, piccolo player and member of the Search Committee. "His passion for music and for what music can mean to everyone in our community will bring us all closer together. We are very eager to begin working with Mark as we imagine what the San Francisco Symphony will be

in its next chapter and what it can mean to the next generation of San Franciscans—not only in terms of our artistry, but to help us be the cultural organization that best reflects and connects with our wonderfully diverse and exceptionally adventurous community. Mark will be a fantastic advocate for the power of our music."

Mark Hanson has served as the Houston Symphony's Executive Director & CEO since 2010, during which time the orchestra appointed Colombian-born, Vienna-trained conductor Andrés Orozco-Estrada as its Music Director; in March 2017 Orozco-Estrada's contract was extended through the 2021–22 season. Early in his tenure, Hanson and the Houston Symphony Board embarked on an ambitious and successful five-year plan to expand the Symphony's audience and donor bases through expanded community partnerships and performances, new concert formats and multi-media projects, and increased marketing and visibility. As a result of that plan, the Houston Symphony—which now has an annual operating budget of \$34 million—saw annual contributed income more than double, earned revenue grow by 20%, annual attendance increase from 286,789 to 339,063 people, and achieved six consecutive balanced budgets.

Hanson led the Houston Symphony in breaking down barriers and deepening connections with audiences of all ages through initiatives including the long-standing "Sound + Vision" series, which adds multimedia elements to classical subscription concerts to further enhance the concert-going experience; the formation of three Diversity Leadership Councils which have established important community relationships and better equipped the institution to become more relevant and accessible; the launch of *Onstage Insights with Andrés* introductions and *Behind the Scenes with Andrés* videos in which the music director provides brief commentary and anecdotes about the music during select concerts; a two season "Musically Speaking" series at Rice University's Stude Concert Hall that provided audiences an opportunity to go behind the score and learn about the historical and contextual elements of the music being performed; and the "On the Music" podcast series led by the Symphony's Musical Ambassador Carlos Andrés Botero. Recently, the Houston Symphony forged a multi-year recording partnership with Dutch recording label PENTATONE, released a Naxos recording of Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, and expanded its local concert broadcast schedule on Houston Public Media's News 88.7 and Classical 91.7FM.

A hallmark initiative of Hanson's tenure in Houston is the Community-Embedded Musicians program, designed to embed musicians deep within the community and to represent and serve the diverse population of Greater Houston. Through this innovative program, the Houston Symphony hired four string players who are embedded in Houston schools, neighborhoods and health-care settings as teaching artists and performers, but who also perform on stage with members of the Houston Symphony in at least 40 concerts each year.

Prior to joining the Houston Symphony, Mark Hanson served as President and Executive Director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO) from 2004–2010. During that time the orchestra appointed Edo de Waart as music director and Marvin Hamlisch as principal pops conductor, undertook major artistic projects such as Mahler's "Symphony of a Thousand" and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* with sets designed by Dale Chihuly, and released a Naxos recording of Roberto Sierra's *Missa Latina*. During Hanson's tenure, the MSO negotiated two four-year orchestra contracts, doubled the number of full-orchestra performances outside of its primary hall, increased average sold capacity by 12%, and more than doubled annual contributed income from individuals, foundations and corporations.

Hanson previously held positions as Executive Director of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (2001–2003) and Rockford Symphony Orchestra (1998–2000). A trained cellist who studied at the Eastman School of Music for two years, he holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and participated in the League of American Orchestras' Orchestra

Management Fellowship Program, holding posts at the New York Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, and Syracuse Symphony Orchestra. He and his wife, Christina, are parents to three sons.

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