



# SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

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## SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY MUSIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS ANNOUNCED AS 2019 KENNEDY CENTER HONOREE

**42nd Annual Kennedy Center Honors to Celebrate the Profound Artistic Impact of Michael Tilson Thomas; Linda Ronstadt; Earth, Wind & Fire; Sally Field; and *Sesame Street***

**Gala will be broadcast on CBS on December 15, 2019**

**San Francisco, CA, July 18, 2019**—In recognition of a career of visionary leadership, and on the occasion of his 25th and final year as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, conductor, composer, and educator Michael Tilson Thomas has today been announced as a recipient of the 2019 Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime artistic achievements. Additional recipients to be honored at the 42nd annual national celebration of the arts include iconic Bay Area singer Linda Ronstadt, R&B collective Earth, Wind & Fire, actress Sally Field, and children's television program *Sesame Street*.

In response to receiving this honor, Michael Tilson Thomas states, "The life of an artist, or of an arts institution, has essentially two moments. The first is inventing yourself which takes vision and gumption. The second is going the distance, sustaining the vision, and sharing it. I was fortunate to grow up around people who did both. My family and my devoted teachers lived every day reaffirming the highest standards and ideals of the arts and of our nation. They understood that the arts really matter when they have a creative role in a living tradition. I am honored that the Kennedy Center, which is a living center of both arts and ideals, has chosen to recognize my work. I hope that I can be thought of as a representative for all American classical musicians at this remarkable event."

"The Kennedy Center Honors celebrates icons who, through their artistry, have left an indelible stamp on our collective cultural consciousness," stated Kennedy Center Chairman David M. Rubenstein. "Earth, Wind & Fire's hooks and grooves are the foundation of a seminal style that continues to shape our musical landscape; Sally Field has brought us unforgettable characters, both joyous and poignant, for more than five decades; Linda Ronstadt is the defining voice of a generation, spanning genres, languages, and continents; *Sesame Street* continues to revolutionize how children and adults learn about our world; and Michael Tilson Thomas goes far beyond keeping score: he has shaped American music and musical institutions for the 21st century."

Throughout his distinguished 25-year tenure, Michael Tilson Thomas has led the San Francisco Symphony in what is widely considered one of the most remarkable and productive artistic partnerships in the orchestra world. His leadership of the SF Symphony has been recognized worldwide for building an orchestra that consistently displays artistry of the highest level in its home of Davies Symphony Hall, on over two dozen national and international tours, and through media and recording projects. He has championed the creation and performance of new music through relationships with today's important musical voices, explored the adventurous and iconic American sound, and enhanced the orchestral concert experience through innovative staging and immersive settings. MTT has led

the Symphony in growing new audiences by making orchestral music accessible to all through extensive, award-winning media projects including audio and video recordings, national radio and television broadcasts, and streaming and web content. Under his leadership, the Orchestra has built a leading commitment to music education and community activities, expanding its involvement with San Francisco's public school children, fostering many of the finest young musicians, and embracing creative ways to engage with the Bay Area's diverse population.

Michael Tilson Thomas' many honors include the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the US government, presented by President Barack Obama in 2010, Columbia University's Ditson Award for Services to American Music, and the President's Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. He was named Musician of the Year and Conductor of the Year by *Musical America*, *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year, and inducted into the California Hall of Fame. Tilson Thomas has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, is a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres of France, and has been profiled on CBS's *60 Minutes* and ABC's *Nightline*.

The Honoree selection process includes solicitation of recommendations from the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, the artistic community, and the general public. This year's selected Honorees were chosen based on the recommendation of the Center's Special Honors Advisory Committee, which is chaired by David Bohnett and includes David M. Rubenstein, Deborah F. Rutter, Michael Lombardo, Cappy McGarr, and Shonda Rhimes, along with past Honors recipients and distinguished artists Julie Andrews, Martina Arroyo, Gloria Estefan, Herbie Hancock, Twyla Tharp, and John Williams.

The Kennedy Center Honors medallions will be presented on Saturday, December 7, the night before the Gala, at a State Department dinner. The Honors Gala will be recorded for broadcast on the CBS Network for the 42nd consecutive year as a two-hour primetime special on Sunday, December 15 at 8 p.m.

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