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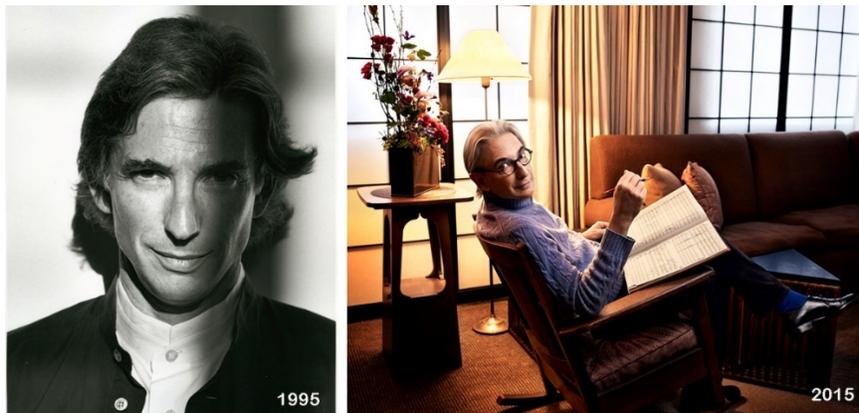
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## **MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS ANNOUNCES PLANS TO CONCLUDE HIS 25-YEAR TENURE AS MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY FOLLOWING THE 2019–2020 SEASON**

**SAN FRANCISCO, October 31, 2017** — Michael Tilson Thomas today announced plans to conclude his distinguished tenure as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) in June 2020. The 2019–2020 Season will mark both his 75th birthday and his 25th year leading the Symphony in what is widely considered one of the most productive musical partnerships in the orchestral world. Tilson Thomas' legacy with the SF Symphony began in 1974 with his debut at age 29, conducting Mahler's Ninth Symphony, and was solidified by his commencement as the Orchestra's 11th Music Director in September 1995. Following the 2019–2020 Season, Michael Tilson Thomas will assume the title of Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony, and will continue to conduct the Orchestra for a minimum of four weeks each season in addition to other special projects. In anticipation of the celebratory 25th anniversary season of the MTT/SFS partnership, the next two years will feature signature recording projects, festivals, commissioning of new works, staged productions, a two-week tour of the United States in 2018–2019, and a three-week European tour in 2019–2020.

"Looking back over these decades I am filled with gratitude for the extraordinary artistic partnership I have had with the members of the Orchestra and for the warm and generous style of music making we

have shared with all of our audiences,” said Michael Tilson Thomas. “Having been a Music Director of an orchestra for most of my adult life and as I approach my 75th birthday, I feel this is an appropriate moment to set aside some of my administrative responsibilities and begin a new period of creative possibilities. Fortunately my new and unique relationship as Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony will allow me to continue to work with my esteemed colleagues for years to come on projects close to my heart.”

Throughout more than two decades, Michael Tilson Thomas’ leadership of the San Francisco 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 embodies the personality and the spirit of San Francisco,” said Sakurako Fisher, President of the San Francisco Symphony. “Striving for excellence in all that he does, creative and curious in nature, inclusive of all, and adventurous in his thinking. We look forward to continuing to support his vision, ideas, and innovation around what an orchestra can mean to its community.”

“When Michael made his debut with the Orchestra in 1974, it was clear that his passion for the music was matched by his ability to communicate it profoundly with our audiences,” said SFS cellist Margaret Tait. “His creative, personal approach to music making and the broadening of the repertoire have been embraced by the Orchestra and made these two decades exciting, rewarding, and inspiring.”

“Working with Michael has been one of the most joyful and meaningful collaborations of my life,” said Eugene Izotov, SFS Principal Oboe. “His inspiration, guidance, and spirit have raised the artistic level of this orchestra and shaped the San Francisco Symphony into the kind of ensemble it has never been before. Although he leaves his post as Music Director, I know that his passion, youthful energy, and endless musical curiosity are here to stay with us.”

“Under Michael Tilson Thomas’ leadership, the worldwide artistic reputation of the Orchestra has experienced a trajectory of unprecedented growth,” said SFS Executive Director Mark C. Hanson. “His vision, energy, and ideas have excited and engaged both new and long-time audiences and have attracted 50 extraordinary musicians who have joined the Orchestra during his tenure. The MTT/SFS partnership is unparalleled and will only continue to strengthen over time.”

## **Michael Tilson Thomas at the San Francisco Symphony**

Since his 1974 debut conducting Mahler's Ninth Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas has built a legacy of **ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE** at the helm of the San Francisco Symphony. Michael Tilson Thomas' signature interpretations and recordings of core masterworks by composers such as Mahler, Beethoven, and Schumann have been recognized globally for their nuance, mastery, and unique musical perspective.

A native Californian, Michael Tilson Thomas has led the San Francisco Symphony in two decades of showcasing the path-breaking artistic work of **AMERICAN MAVERICKS** where he has championed music by pioneers of the American sound such as Charles Ives, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Carl Ruggles, John Cage, Henry Cowell, Aaron Copland, Lou Harrison, Henry Brant, Morton Feldman, Edgard Varèse, and Lukas Foss, among others. In 2000 and 2012, MTT and the SFS broke new ground with the far-reaching *American Mavericks* Festivals, featuring concerts dedicated to these composers, as well as educational partnerships, experiential learning, recordings, a national concert tour, and a host of new media tools to allow for a deeper understanding of this music.

Since his appointment as SFS Music Director in 1995, Michael Tilson Thomas has represented unwavering commitment to championing **NEW AND UNFAMILIAR WORKS** with the Orchestra. Under his artistic leadership they have established and maintained commissioning relationships with composers such as John Adams, Robin Holloway, Meredith Monk, Steve Reich, and Charles Wuorinen, and formed new bonds with young composers such as Samuel Adams, Mason Bates, and Ted Hearne. In addition to commissioning and performing dozens of new compositions by this era's most important musical voices, Tilson Thomas has led the Orchestra to champion these new works by taking them on national and international tours, and recording and releasing them on the Orchestra's in-house record label, ensuring their exposure and life beyond their local premiere. In 2012, in partnership with the publisher Boosey & Hawkes and the New World Symphony, MTT and the SFS established the *New Voices* program to seek out and promote the work of new composing talents. The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers recognized the Symphony's commitment to innovative programming with eight awards since 2000.

Michael Tilson Thomas' creative reimagining of the **CONCERT EXPERIENCE** has brought cutting-edge original staging to works of the symphonic and operatic repertory. Since 2000, he has conceived acclaimed semi-staged productions ranging from operas such as *The Flying Dutchman*, *Peter Grimes*, and *Peer Gynt*, to works of musical theater like *West Side Story* and *On the Town*, to bold stagings of concert works such as *Missa solemnis*. Further pushing the boundaries of traditional orchestral performances, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony opened SoundBox in 2014, presenting evenings of eclectic musical exploration to culturally adventurous listeners in a club-like environment. A resounding cultural and critical success, SoundBox has broadened the classical music experience.

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony's award-winning **MEDIA** catalogue began in 1996 with a debut live recording with the Orchestra, Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* on RCA Red Seal. It

was awarded the Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance, and several years later Tilson Thomas and the Orchestra won three 1999 Grammy Awards for their all-Stravinsky recording. In 2001, the San Francisco Symphony under Tilson Thomas became the first US orchestra to successfully launch its own audio/video recording label, introducing SFS Media with a renowned Mahler cycle that encompasses all of the composer's symphonies and major song cycles. The label has gone on to offer recordings of many other major works, including those of Beethoven, Ives, and John Adams, as well as a compilation of American maverick composers and a complete *West Side Story*. In all there have been 44 SFS Media releases to date. They have captured eight Grammy Awards as well as such honors as France's Diapason d'Or and Germany's Echo Klassik and Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik awards. MTT's unique ability to communicate the joys and context of symphonic music led to the creation of *Keeping Score*, a multi-year, multi-tier program (inaugurated in 2004) to bring music to tens of millions of Americans through national radio and television programs, DVDs, in-school education programs, and a website that enables visitors to delve deeply into the music, at their own pace.

Guided by Michael Tilson Thomas' lifelong commitment to music **EDUCATION**, the San Francisco Symphony has significantly expanded its education and community programs to reach more than 100,000 children, students, educators, and families annually. Its *Adventures in Music* program now ensures that every child in grades 1–5 in San Francisco's public elementary schools receives free and equitable access to music education for five consecutive years; after which the Symphony's training programs for young adults nurture the next generation of musicians and citizens, from amateurs to scholars of the highest pre-professional level. Under Tilson Thomas' leadership, the San Francisco Symphony's music education program has grown to be among the most comprehensive of its kind.

Michael Tilson Thomas' many **HONORS AND MILESTONES** include the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the U.S. 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 magazine's Hall of Fame. Tilson Thomas has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres of France. During the 2019-2020 season, his 25th, Tilson Thomas celebrates his 75th birthday as well as the 50th anniversary of his relationship with the London Symphony Orchestra, where he served as Principal Conductor and is now Conductor Laureate. 2017 marks the 30th anniversary of the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy, which MTT co-founded and continues to lead as Artistic Director. To date, the San Francisco Symphony has awarded 18 graduates of this program permanent positions in the Orchestra.

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(High resolution images of Michael Tilson Thomas available in the SFS' [Online Photo Library](#))

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