

Contact:
Public Relations
San Francisco Symphony
(415) 503-5474
publicrelations@sfsymphony.org
sfsymphony.org/press

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / JANUARY 9, 2019



(High resolution images of Michael Tilson Thomas, Gil Shaham, Steven Mackey, and the San Francisco Symphony are available for download from the San Francisco Symphony's [Online Photo Library](#). Photo credit L to R: Stefan Cohen, Luke Ratray, Kah Poon.)

**MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTS THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY IN
WORLD PREMIERE OF STEVEN MACKEY'S *PORTALS, SCENES AND
CELEBRATIONS*, FEBRUARY 7–9 AT DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL**

**Program also includes Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4* and Gil Shaham performing
Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1***

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT) leads the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) in the world premiere of [Steven Mackey's *Portals, Scenes and Celebrations*](#)—commissioned by the SFS and composed in honor of MTT; **Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1*** featuring acclaimed violinist **Gil Shaham**; and **Tchaikovsky's expressive *Symphony No. 4*, February 7–9** at Davies Symphony Hall. Mackey's *Portals, Scenes and Celebrations* is a colorful, energetic work comprising five contrasting tableaux, connected by musical material which the composer describes as “portals to other dimensions rather than logical consequences.” The work was inspired by Mackey's correspondence with MTT, who asked him to compose “an up-tempo, dazzling and joyous” piece. This is the sixth work Mackey has written for MTT in their twenty-five years of collaboration, others including *Lost and Found*, *Tuck and Roll*, *Pedal Tones*, and *Turn the Key*.

[Gil Shaham](#) is one of the foremost violinists of our time—his flawless technique combined with his inimitable warmth and generosity of spirit has solidified him as an American master. The Grammy Award-winner and *Musical*

America's 2012 "Instrumentalist of the Year" appears regularly with the San Francisco Symphony, most recently accompanying MTT and the SFS on a Tour of California in March, 2018. Shaham has previously recorded Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto with André Previn and the London Symphony Orchestra, releasing it on the Deutsche Grammophon label in 1996. He returns to Davies Symphony Hall to perform Prokofiev's warmly romantic Violin Concerto with MTT and the San Francisco Symphony in these concerts, February 7–9.

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, composed in 1877 and dedicated to his patron Mme. Nadezhda von Meck, captures Tchaikovsky's emotional state surrounding the events of his life during that year—his strange new involvement with von Meck, based solely on written correspondence, and a swift and failed attempt at marriage to Antonina Ivanovna Miliukova. Writing to his friend and fellow composer Sergei Taneyev, Tchaikovsky said, "Of course my symphony is program music, but it would be impossible to give the program in words... But ought this not always to be the case with a symphony, the most lyrical of musical forms? Ought it not to express all those things for which words cannot be found but which nevertheless arise in the heart and cry out for expression?" Beginning an hour and half prior to each evening performance, the concerts will be preceded by screenings of [Keeping Score – MTT on Music: The Making of a Performance](#), in which MTT and the SFS take viewers on a musical journey to uncover Tchaikovsky's hidden history and the significance of his Symphony No. 4. The national *Keeping Score* PBS television series and multimedia project was launched by MTT and the SFS in 2004 to make classical music accessible to people of all ages and musical backgrounds and celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2019.

These performances of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony are dedicated to former San Francisco Symphony double bass **Charles Burrell**. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his SFS debut, the Orchestra celebrates Burrell's tremendous achievements in classical music, including his appointment as the first African American musician of a major symphony orchestra in the United States. A bass player equally adept at both classical and jazz performance, Burrell was inspired to become a professional classical musician when he heard a radio broadcast of the San Francisco Symphony, led by then-SFS Music Director Pierre Monteux in the 1930's. He remembers the Orchestra playing Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and, in that moment, determined that he would one day play for the SFS. His dream was realized when he made his SFS debut in 1959.

Calendar editors, please note:

All concerts take place at Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

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.

Pre-Order Food and Drinks: Concertgoers may pre-order food and beverages by calling 415-252-1937 or emailing Global Gourmet Catering staff at davieshallpreorder@ggcatering.com before the performance to place an order.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY, MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTING

[Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 10 am \(Open Rehearsal\)](#)

[Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 8 pm](#)

[Friday, February 8, 2019 at 8 pm](#)

[Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 8 pm](#)

Michael Tilson Thomas conductor
Gil Shaham violin
San Francisco Symphony

Steven MACKEY
Portals, Scenes, and Celebrations [SFS Commission & World Premiere]

PROKOFIEV

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major, Opus 19

TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

Tickets: \$20–156

Audio Program Notes: Listen to a free podcast about Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, hosted by [KDFC's Rik Malone](#). All podcasts are archived, and can be streamed from sfsymphony.org/podcasts, and downloaded from the [iTunes store and from soundcloud.com/sfsymphony](#).

Pre-Concert *Keeping Score* Screening: concerts will be preceded by a screening of [Keeping Score – MTT on Music: The Making of a Performance](#), beginning an hour and half prior to each evening performance. Free to all concert ticket holders; doors open 15 minutes before.

Pre-Concert Talk: Peter Grunberg will give an "Inside Music" talk from the stage one hour prior to the Open Rehearsal on February 7. Free to all concert ticket holders; doors open 15 minutes before.

Broadcast / Archived Stream: A broadcast of these performances will air Tuesday, February 19 at 8 pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and kdfc.com where it will be available for on demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

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



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

These concerts are made possible through the generosity of Emirates Airline.

Support for Gil Shaham's appearance is provided by the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Guest Artists.

Additional support is provided by the Athena T. Blackburn Endowed Fund for Russian Music.

The performance of Steven Mackey's New Work is supported by the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

Emirates is the Official Airline of the San Francisco Symphony.

Franklin Templeton Investments and Fiduciary Trust International are Season Sponsors of the San Francisco Symphony.

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

The San Francisco Symphony's Official Radio Partner is KDFC, The Bay Area's Radio Home for Classical Music and the Arts

- SFS -