



SAN FRANCISCO  
SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY CHORUS**  
RAGNAR BOHLIN, DIRECTOR

One of America's most distinguished choruses, the 152-member San Francisco Symphony Chorus led by Director [Ragnar Bohlin](#) is known for its precision, power, and versatility. The SFS Chorus performs more than 26 concerts each season and is comprised of 32 professional and 120 volunteer members. *San Francisco Chronicle* classical music critic Joshua Kosman has praised the Chorus for its "tonal beauty" and "customary vibrancy and ardor." Most recently, the SFS Chorus can be heard along with MTT and the SF Symphony on the November 2015 SFS Media release of Beethoven's Mass in C major. Members of the chorus can also be heard on the SF Symphony's complete concert recording of Bernstein's score for *West Side Story*, released in June 2014 and nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album and winner of the 2015 ICMA Award for Best Album.

In his 25th and final season as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the SF Symphony and Chorus in Stravinsky's *Canticum sacrum* and Symphony of Psalms, September 26–28; Brahms' *A German Requiem*, May 22–24; semi-staged performances of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*, June 11–15; and the season's grand finale—Mahler's transcendent *Symphony of a Thousand*, June 25–28. In December 2019, the SFS Chorus is featured in holiday concerts including Handel's *Messiah*, 'Twas the Night – A Festival of Carols, Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, and Vince Guaraldi's *A Charlie Brown Christmas* – Live, and on December 5, members of the Chorus join the SF Symphony for a special performance with Andrea Bocelli at San Francisco's new Chase Center. On April 4, 2020, Ragnar Bohlin leads the SFS Chorus in a solo concert featuring J.S. Bach's *Magnificat*.

Established in 1973 at the request of Seiji Ozawa, then the San Francisco Symphony's Music Director, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus has sung under the world's major conductors, including SFS Music Directors Michael Tilson Thomas, Herbert Blomstedt, Edo de Waart, and Seiji Ozawa; they have also performed with Kurt Masur, James Conlon, Valery Gergiev, David Robertson, Charles Dutoit, Sir Neville Marriner, Sir Roger Norrington, Yuri Temirkanov, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Wolfgang Sawallisch, and Robert Shaw. Louis Magor served as the Chorus's Director during its first decade, and in 1982 Margaret Hillis assumed the ensemble's leadership. The following year Vance George was named Director, serving through the 2005–06 season. Ragnar Bohlin assumed the position of Chorus Director in March 2007. In February 2001, the Chorus made its Carnegie Hall debut in two sold-out performances of music by Mahler and Stravinsky with MTT and the SFS.

Recordings featuring the SFS Chorus have won a total of eight Grammy awards, including three for Best Choral Performance. Most recently, they were featured on the SFS Media's recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with MTT and the SFS, which won three 2010 Grammys, including the award for Best Choral Performance, under the direction of Ragnar Bohlin. Previous Grammys awarded to the SFS Chorus include Best Choral Performance for Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* in 1995; Best Choral Performance for Orff's *Carmina burana* in 1992; Best Classical Album with the SFS for Mahler's Symphony No. 3 and *Kindertotenlieder* in 2004; and Best Classical Album for their performance of *Perséphone* as part of a collection of Stravinsky's music in 2000.

The Chorus is also featured on recordings with MTT and the SFS in Beethoven's *Cantata on the Death of Emperor Joseph II* and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and *Das klagende Lied*, Ives's *An American Journey*, and selections from Berlioz's *Lélio*. The Chorus may be heard under the direction of Conductor Laureate Herbert Blomstedt in Grieg's incidental music for *Peer Gynt*, its first recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, which was nominated for a Grammy; and a collection of choral works by Brahms. The Chorus has also recorded John Adams's *Harmonium* twice, on ECM under Edo de Waart's direction and on Nonesuch with the composer conducting; Gordon Getty's *Annabel Lee* and *Young America* with MTT and the SFS in live

concerts for inclusion in a PentaTone Classics disc of Getty choral works; and Jerod Impichchaachaaha Tate's *Tracing Mississippi* and *Iholba* with the SFS for Thunderbird Records. The Chorus has released two solo recordings: *Christmas by the Bay*, which was released in 1998 on the Delos label and nominated for a Grammy in the Best Classical Crossover category, and *Voices 1900/2000*, released on the Delos label in 2001.

The Chorus appears in the second season of *Keeping Score*, the SFS's national television program, in Ives's *Holidays Symphony*. The episode aired nationwide on PBS in 2009 and is now available on DVD, Blu-ray, and streaming online at <http://www.pbs.org/keepingscore/ives-holidays-symphony.html>. The Chorus can be heard on the soundtracks of the films *Amadeus*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *Godfather III*, and on the video/DVD release of the Emmy-winning *Sweeney Todd* with the SFS.

*(August 2019)*