



Michael Tilson Thomas
Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony

Conductor, composer, and educator Michael Tilson Thomas is Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony, Co-Founder and Artistic Director of the New World Symphony, and Conductor Laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra. In June 2020, he completed a remarkable 25-year tenure as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, becoming the Orchestra's first Music Director Laureate. Beginning with his debut in 1974, Tilson Thomas and the Symphony developed what is widely considered one of the most dynamic and productive partnerships in the orchestral world, notable for innovative programming, enhancing the orchestral concert experience with multimedia and creative staging, showcasing the works of American composers, and attracting new audiences to orchestral music, both at home at Davies Symphony Hall and through the Orchestra's extensive media projects.

A Los Angeles native, Tilson Thomas studied with John Crown and Ingolf Dahl at the University of Southern California, becoming Music Director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra at nineteen. He worked with Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Copland at the famed Monday Evening Concerts and was pianist and conductor for the Piatigorsky and Heifetz master classes. In 1969, Tilson Thomas was appointed Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Ten days later he came to international recognition, replacing Music Director William Steinberg in mid-concert at Lincoln Center, going on to become the BSO's Principal Guest Conductor. He has also served as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic; Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and as Principal Conductor, Principal Guest Conductor, and now Conductor Laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra. Tilson Thomas is also Artistic Director of the New World Symphony, which he co-founded as an orchestral academy dedicated to preparing gifted graduates of distinguished music programs for leadership roles in classical music. Since its inception in 1987, the New World Symphony has helped launch the careers of more than 1,200 alumni worldwide, including more than 15 members of the San Francisco Symphony.

Tilson Thomas's recordings have won numerous international awards, including 12 Grammys, 11 for San Francisco Symphony recordings. In 2014, he inaugurated SoundBox, the SF Symphony's alternative performance space and eclectic live music series. His television credits include the New York Philharmonic Young People's Concerts and *Keeping Score* on PBS-TV, which he and the San Francisco Symphony launched in 2004. His compositions include *From the Diary of Anne Frank* and *Meditations on Rilke*, both recorded with the SF Symphony and released on SFS Media in June 2020; *Shōwa/Shoáh*; settings of poems by Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman; *Island Music*; *Notturmo*; and *Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind*. Tilson Thomas is a 2019 recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors, was *Musical America's* Musician and Conductor of the Year, and was inducted into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame. He has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, was inducted in the California Hall of Fame, and was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Obama. Tilson Thomas was named an Officier in the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in June 2020, recognizing his continued contributions to global culture and the vast impact of his 25 years as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony.