

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / JANUARY 3, 2020**



(High resolution images of Michael Tilson Thomas, Ryan McKinny, Sasha Cooke, Emanuel Ax, and the San Francisco Symphony are available for download from the San Francisco Symphony's [Online Photo Library](#).)

## **MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTS THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY IN TWO CONCERT PROGRAMS, JANUARY 9–18, AT DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL**

**January 9–12 concerts feature the world premiere of Michael Tilson Thomas' *Meditations on Rilke* performed by Artist-in-Residence mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and bass-baritone Ryan McKinny; selections from Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*; Berlioz's Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*; and Ravel's *La Valse***

**On January 16–18, MTT leads the Orchestra in the West Coast premiere of SFS-commissioned *Fountain of Youth* by Julia Wolfe; Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*; Berg's *Three Pieces for Orchestra*; and Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 2* featuring pianist Emanuel Ax**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA**—Music Director [Michael Tilson Thomas](#) (MTT) leads the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) in two multi-faceted programs this January at Davies Symphony Hall. On **January 9–12**, Artist-in-Residence mezzo-soprano [Sasha Cooke](#) and bass-baritone [Ryan McKinny](#) are featured in the world premiere performances of **Michael Tilson Thomas'** song cycle *Meditations on Rilke*, a musical setting of lyric poems by German modernist Rainer Maria Rilke, alongside selections from **Mahler's** setting of German folk poems *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Tilson Thomas comments on his new composition: "These *Meditations on Rilke* are reflections of the many moods the poems suggest. The motives and harmonies of these pieces have been with me for years, decades. This approach to music as a kind of lifelong journal, or confessional companion, was what my father, and as I now have learned, my grandfather, and even my great grandfather, experienced. *Meditations on Rilke* is based

on motives that recur, recombine, and morph differently in each song.” Rounding out the program, MTT conducts the SFS in **Berlioz’s Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*** and **Ravel’s** captivating ***La Valse***.

On **January 16–18**, MTT leads the SFS in the West Coast premiere of ***Fountain of Youth***, an SFS Co-commission by Pulitzer Prize-winning American composer **Julia Wolfe**—famed for her melding of folk, rock, and classical idioms. The work was first performed in April, 2019 by the New World Symphony in Miami, with MTT conducting. The concerts also feature world-renowned pianist **Emanuel Ax** kicking off the Symphony’s Beethoven250 celebrations with performances of **Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 2**. Well known as a Beethoven virtuoso, Emanuel Ax is featured on two SFS Media recordings with MTT and the SFS—**Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 3**, released in 2015, and **Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4**, released in 2011. The program concludes with **Wagner’s *Siegfried Idyll*** and **Berg’s** spellbinding **Three Pieces for Orchestra**—recorded and released on the SFS Media label in 2017. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Berg’s Three Pieces for Orchestra recording.

From January 9 through June 31, there will be an informative lobby display on the First Tier of Davies Symphony Hall titled *MTT25*. The exhibit celebrates Michael Tilson Thomas’ twenty-five years as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony through text, photos, archival items, and video components.

### **About the San Francisco Symphony**

The San Francisco Symphony is widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the U.S. Under the artistic direction of Michael Tilson Thomas since 1995, the Orchestra is a leading presence among American orchestras at home and around the world, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. In December 2018, the San Francisco Symphony announced Esa-Pekka Salonen as its Music Director Designate. Salonen will begin his appointment as the SFS’s 12th Music Director in September 2020, at which time Michael Tilson Thomas will become the Orchestra’s first Music Director Laureate, following his remarkable 25-year tenure as Music Director.

The San Francisco Symphony presents more than 215 concerts and presentations annually for an audience of nearly 500,000 in its home of Davies Symphony Hall and through its active national and international touring. A cornerstone of the organization’s mission, the San Francisco Symphony’s education programs are the most extensive offered by any American orchestra today, providing free comprehensive music education to every first-through fifth-grade student in the San Francisco public schools, and serving over 100,000 children, students, educators, and families annually. The SFS has won such recording awards as France’s Grand Prix du Disque and Britain’s *Gramophone Award*, as well as 15 Grammy Awards. In 2004, the SFS launched the multimedia *Keeping Score* on PBS-TV and the web. In 2014, the SFS inaugurated SoundBox, a new experimental performance venue and music series located backstage at Davies Symphony Hall. SFS radio broadcasts, the first in the nation to feature symphonic music when they began in 1926, today carry the Orchestra’s concerts across the country.

### **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](https://www.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](mailto:davieshallpreorder@ggcatering.com) before the performance to place an order.

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## **SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY, MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTING**

[Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 8pm](#)

[Friday, January 10, 2020 at 8 pm](#)

[Saturday, January 11, 2020 at 8 pm](#)

[Sunday, January 12, 2020 at 2 pm](#)

[Michael Tilson Thomas](#) conductor  
[Sasha Cooke](#) mezzo-soprano  
[Ryan McKinny](#) baritone  
**San Francisco Symphony**

## **BERLIOZ**

Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*, Opus 23

## **Michael TILSON THOMAS**

*Meditations on Rilke* [World Premiere]

*Herbsttag (Autumn Day)*

**Ryan McKinny** bass-baritone

*Ich lebe mein Leben in wachsenden Ringen (I Live My Life in Ever-widening Circles)*

**Sasha Cooke** mezzo-soprano

*Das Lied des Trinkers (The Drinkers' Song)*

**Ryan McKinny** bass-baritone

*Immer wieder (Again and Again)*

**Sasha Cooke** mezzo-soprano

*Imaginärer Lebenslauf (Imaginary Life Journey)*

**Sasha Cooke** mezzo-soprano

**Ryan McKinny** bass-baritone

*Herbst (Autumn)*

**Ryan McKinny** bass-baritone

## **MAHLER**

Selections from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

**Sasha Cooke** mezzo-soprano

*Rheinlegendchen*

*Das irdische Leben*

*Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen*

*Urlicht*

## **RAVEL**

*La Valse*

**Tickets:** \$20–165

**Audio Program Notes:** Listen to a free podcast about Ravel's *La Valse*, hosted by [KDFC's Rik Malone](#).

All podcasts are archived, and can be streamed from [sfsymphony.org/podcasts](https://www.sfsymphony.org/podcasts), and downloaded from the [iTunes store](#) and from [soundcloud.com/sfsymphony](https://www.soundcloud.com/sfsymphony).

**Pre-Concert Talk:** Laura Prichard will give an "Inside Music" talk from the stage one hour prior to each performance. Free to all concert ticket holders; doors open 15 minutes before.

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

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# SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY, MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS CONDUCTING

[Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 10 am \(Open Rehearsal\)](#)

[Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 8pm](#)

[Friday, January 17, 2020 at 8 pm](#)

[Saturday, January 18, 2020 at 8 pm](#)

[Michael Tilson Thomas](#) conductor

[Emanuel Ax](#) piano

**San Francisco Symphony**

**Julia WOLFE**

*Fountain of Youth* [SFS Co-commission, West Coast Premiere]

**BEETHOVEN**

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Opus 19

**WAGNER**

*Siegfried Idyll*

**BERG**

Three Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 6 (1929 revision)

**Tickets:** \$20–185

**Audio Program Notes:** Listen to a free podcast about Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra, hosted by [KDFC's Rik Malone](#). All podcasts are archived, and can be streamed from [sfsymphony.org/podcasts](https://sfsymphony.org/podcasts), and downloaded from the [iTunes store](#) and from [soundcloud.com/sfsymphony](https://soundcloud.com/sfsymphony).

**Pre-Concert Talk:** Laura Prichard will give an "Inside Music" talk from the stage one hour prior to each performance. Free to all concert ticket holders; doors open 15 minutes before.

**Broadcast / Archived Stream:** A broadcast of these performances will air Tuesday, January 28 at 8 pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and [kdfc.com](https://kdfc.com) where it will be available for on demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

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*January 9–12 concerts, a part of The Barbro and Bernard Osher Masterworks Series, are made possible by a generous gift from Barbro and Bernard Osher.*

*Sasha Cooke's appearance is supported by the Mrs. George John Otto Memorial Vocalist Fund.*

*This World Premiere of Michael Tilson Thomas' Meditations on Rilke and The West Coast Premiere of Julia Wolfe's Fountain of Youth are generously supported by the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Works of Music.*

*January 9–12 and January 16–18 concerts are generously supported in part by our MTT Angels.*

*The Matthew Kelly Family Foundation generously supports the January 16–18 performances in memory of Matthew Kelly.*

*Additional support for January 16–18 concerts is provided by Charles and Nancy Geschke.*

*The Open Rehearsals are endowed by a bequest from the estate of Katharine Hanrahan.*

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