

SF SYMPHONY

2020-21 SEASON REVIEW



THANK YOU

As we reflect on the extraordinary year we have all shared, the San Francisco Symphony expresses deepest gratitude to our remarkable community of supporters. Your generosity during the 2020–21 season allowed us to continue sharing the joy of music throughout the Bay Area and beyond, even when faced with the unpredictability and challenges of the pandemic. Because of you, the San Francisco Symphony was able to approach this season as a catalyst for innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity—exploring new performance venues and formats, joining together for engaging virtual events, tailoring our music education programs to meet the needs of our community, and launching our new on-demand video streaming service SFSymphony+. After more than a year of being unable to perform together in our home of Davies Symphony Hall, this season also marked a joyful return to the communal live concert experience we all treasure.

It is because of your support that we were able to broaden and deepen the San Francisco Symphony's impact here at home and around the globe. We are moved by your love of music and humbled by your dedication to our Orchestra throughout this unforgettable year. On behalf of the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, Board of Governors, staff, volunteers, and community, thank you for your unwavering support.



Priscilla B. Geeslin
President



Matthew Spivey
Interim Chief Executive Officer



Adopted in March 2021, the San Francisco Symphony Board of Governors, musicians, and administration came together to create our new Vision and Mission statements.

Vision

The San Francisco Symphony strives to be a leader and catalyst for reimagining how people everywhere engage with orchestral music in deep and meaningful ways.

Mission

The San Francisco Symphony exists to inspire and serve audiences and communities throughout the Bay Area and the world through the power of musical performance.



ESA-PEKKA SALONEN



NICHOLAS
BRITELL



JULIA
BULLOCK



CLAIRE
CHASE



BRYCE
DESSNER



PEKKA
KUUSISTO



NICO
MUHLY



CAROL
REILEY



ESPERANZA
SPALDING

NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR & COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Esa-Pekka Salonen assumed his post as the San Francisco Symphony's twelfth Music Director in the 2020–21 season, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape.

The San Francisco Symphony's reimagined 2020–21 season reflected the challenges and possibilities of the present moment while looking ahead to an exciting future. In their inaugural season together, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by **eight Collaborative Partners** from a variety of cultural disciplines. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers has joined with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony to embark on a future of experimentation by collaborating on new ideas, breaking conventional rules, and creating unique and powerful live and digital concert experiences.

Nicholas Britell
Composer and pianist

Julia Bullock
Classical singer and curator

Claire Chase
Flutist, educator, and creator of new and experimental music

Bryce Dessner
Composer and guitarist

Pekka Kuusisto
Violinist, musical director, and artistic trailblazer

Nico Muhly
Composer and multifaceted collaborator

Carol Reiley
Artificial intelligence entrepreneur and roboticist

esperanza spalding
Jazz bassist, vocalist, and undefinable artist

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

September 2020

New Music Director **Esa-Pekka Salonen** and eight Collaborative Partners—Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and *esperanza spalding*—officially begin their tenure.

Intimate 1:1 Concerts—shared between one SF Symphony musician and one community member or household at a time—reintroduce safe live music performances after an extended pause due to the pandemic. Enjoyed by 1,300+ members of the community, these free and unique music experiences are offered throughout the season on the outdoor terraces at Davies Symphony Hall and, thanks to their outstanding partnership, the San Francisco Botanical Garden.

The **Emerging Black Composers Project** launches in partnership with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Over the next ten years, ten composers will each receive a \$15,000 commission; workshops; performances by the SF Symphony, SF Conservatory, and other Bay Area organizations; and mentorship from Bay Area music directors Edwin Outwater and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Trevor Weston, Professor of Music and Chair of the Music Department at Drew University, is awarded the first commission in June 2021. In recognition of the level of skill and talent in the group of finalists, the selection committee also names three additional prizewinners: Jonathan Bingham, Shawn Okpebholo, and Sumi Tonooka. Weston's winning piece will receive performances by the San Francisco Symphony in the 2022-23 season.



SF SYMPHONY CELLIST
BARBARA BOGATIN, 1:1 CONCERT

November 2020

The SF Symphony, together with host and curator Martha Rodríguez-Salazar, offers a vibrant virtual celebration of the tradition of **Día de los Muertos** with classical and folk music from Latin America on NBC Bay Area, Telemundo, and streaming free on [sfsymphony.org](https://www.sfsymphony.org). (44k views)

Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home broadcasts locally in the Bay Area on KQED 9 and NBC while simultaneously streaming for free worldwide on [sfsymphony.org](https://www.sfsymphony.org). The concert event features a new composition written by Nico Muhly specifically for the occasion with contributions from all eight Collaborative Partners captured in locations around the globe. (220k views)



MUSICIAN/EDUCATOR
MARTHA RODRÍGUEZ-SALAZAR

December 2020

The SF Symphony celebrates 40 years of **Deck the Hall** by broadcasting a unique and festive digital program locally on NBC Bay Area and Telemundo, and providing free on-demand streaming of the program online. (190k views)

Sakurako Fisher, President of the San Francisco Symphony since 2012, steps down after eight years of extraordinary leadership. In her role as President, Fisher presided over the Orchestra’s artistic growth and audience development initiatives, and nurtured a culture of inclusion and transparency. **Priscilla B. Geeslin**, a member of the San Francisco Symphony Board of Governors since 1995, officially begins her tenure as the Symphony’s new President on December 9, 2020.

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

February 2021

The Symphony's new on-demand video streaming service **SFSymphony+** launches with a slate of original content, including a reimagined digital SoundBox series, new CURRENTS episodes exploring the intersections of classical and varied musical cultures, chamber music performances, and other special projects. (40k views)

The SF Symphony welcomes the Year of the Ox with a new digital version of the annual Lunar New Year event. The **Chinese New Year Virtual Celebration** is made available for free on SFSymphony+ and broadcast locally on NBC Bay Area, KTSF, and UChannelTV. (84k views)



March 2021

SF Symphony collaborates with Bay Area contemporary dance company Post:ballet to present **Playing Changes**, an intimate performance of seven works for solo violin and dance featuring SF Symphony Associate Principal Second Violin Helen Kim and Post:ballet dancers. **Playing Changes** is released for free on SFSymphony+. (2k views)



POST:BALLET DANCER LANDES DIXON AND SF SYMPHONY VIOLINIST HELEN KIM, COURTESY OF POST:BALLET

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony win a **2021 Grammy Award** in the category of Best Classical Compendium for their live concert recording of MTT's *From the Diary of Anne Frank & Meditations on Rilke* on SFS Media.

May 2021

Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen leads the San Francisco Symphony in a triumphant **return to live performances** at Davies Symphony Hall after an absence of 14 months. The first set of concerts welcomes more than 400 invited audiences of frontline workers and community partners in gratitude for their work supporting our city in critical ways throughout the pandemic.



July–August 2021

Summer with the Symphony features seven weeks of concerts in beloved venues across the Bay Area including Davies Symphony Hall, Stern Grove Festival, and Stanford’s Frost Amphitheater. Close to 33,000 audience members attended concerts conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, and guest conductors including Michael Morgan, Lina González-Granados, and Xian Zhang. The Symphony distributes more than 1,000 free Summer with the Symphony tickets to health care workers and community partners.



ARTISTIC VIBRANCY

The SF Symphony continued its commitment to artistic excellence this season with a slate of newly created virtual programs and events and the return of live concerts after more than a year due to the pandemic.

1

New Grammy Award in the category of Best Classical Compendium for Michael Tilson Thomas' *From the Diary of Anne Frank & Meditations on Rilke*. This is the 16th Grammy award for the San Francisco Symphony, and ninth since launching SFS Media in 2001.

5

CURRENTS programs exploring Indian Classical, American Indian, Zimbabwean, Persian, and Klezmer musical cultures with guest artists and SF Symphony musicians. Since this digital series began in the 2019-20 season, there have been a total of 9 episodes, with additional programs exploring Chinese, Mexican, Jazz, and Hip Hop musical cultures.

5

Concerts at **Stanford University's Frost Amphitheater**, including Esa-Pekka Salonen's first programs with the Orchestra at this historic outdoor venue.

6

SF Symphony-commissioned new works, including Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Saltat sobrius: Fantasy upon Sederunt principes*, featured in SoundBox: Patterns, and Mohammad Nejad's *Rain Dance*, featured in CURRENTS: Invisible Borders.

6

Digital SoundBox programs curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen, Collaborative Partners Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, and Nico Muhly, and guest artist Destiny Muhammad. The series, now in its seventh season, is known for continuously pushing the envelope with adventurous programming, innovative design, and multimedia elements.

9

Chamber music performances featuring San Francisco Symphony musicians in works by Florence Price, Ludwig van Beethoven, Dmitri Shostakovich, and more, available for free at SFSymphony+.

24

Live concerts at Davies Symphony Hall. Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen leads the San Francisco Symphony's first live performances after 14 months on May 6 and 7, 2021 for an invited audience of Bay Area first responders and representatives of community and cultural groups.

1,300+

Audience members attended 1:1 Concerts, shared between one SF Symphony musician and one community member or household at a time.

21,389

Audience members reached through live concerts.

1.35 million

Audience members reached through TV broadcasts, sfsymphony.org, and SFSymphony+.

90 million

Global listeners reached through a variety of high-quality digital service providers including Apple Music, Spotify, and Amazon Prime.

SFS MEDIA RELEASES

SFS Media recordings reflect a broad range of programming that showcases music by trailblazing composers and core classical masterworks. Recorded live in concert and engineered at Davies Symphony Hall, these audio recordings are released on hybrid SACD and high-quality digital formats.





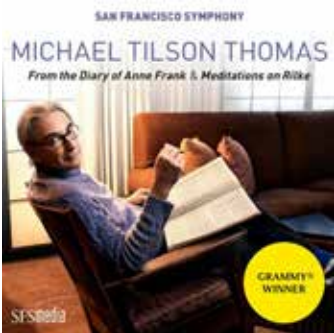
Copland Symphony No. 3

Recording of Copland Symphony No. 3 nominated for a 2020 Grammy award for “Best Orchestral Performance.”



Berg: Violin Concerto, Seven Early Songs, Three Pieces for Orchestra

Recording of Berg’s Violin Concerto, Seven Early Songs, and Three Pieces for Orchestra. Available on SACD and wherever music is downloaded and streamed.



Michael Tilson Thomas: *From the Diary of Anne Frank & Meditations on Rilke*

Recording of Michael Tilson Thomas’ *From the Diary of Anne Frank & Meditations on Rilke* won a 2020 Grammy award for “Best Classical Compendium.”



Nico Muhly: *Throughline*

Commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony and recorded in September 2020, *Throughline* received its world premiere as part of the televised digital concert event *Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home*. In August 2021, SFS Media released *Throughline* for digital download and streaming via all major retailers worldwide.

SF SYMPHONY PREMIERES

The 2020-21 season featured a wide range of works receiving their first San Francisco Symphony performances—including three world premieres—in a variety of concert formats.

World Premieres

Collaborative Partner Nico Muhly's *Throughline*, commissioned by the SF Symphony, was the title piece of our virtual Gala and featured contributions from all eight Collaborative Partners and Symphony musicians.

Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Saltat sobrius: Fantasy on Sederunt principes* was commissioned by the SF Symphony and was included in the Salonen-curated SoundBox: Patterns program

Bay Area composer Lukáš Janata's *Flux*, commissioned by the SF Symphony, was featured in SoundBox: Focus, curated by Nico Muhly.

US Premiere

Daniel Kidane's *Be Still*, a meditation on the global pandemic written in late 2020, was featured in live concerts at Davies Symphony Hall conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen in June 2021.



CURRENTS: RHYTHM SPIRITS, CURATED BY ZAKIR HUSSAIN

SF Symphony Premieres

The Symphony's new video streaming service SFSymphony+ provided ample opportunities for exploring works new to the San Francisco Symphony.

The CURRENTS series included 30 compositions receiving their first SF Symphony performances, including two Symphony-commissioned arrangements: Joshua Horowitz's *A Doina far di Kale (A Song for the Bride)*, featured in CURRENTS: Vessel of Song, and Mohammad Nejad's *Rain Dance*, featured in CURRENTS: Invisible Borders.

The SoundBox series continued its legacy of adventurous programming, offering 29 works in their SF Symphony premieres, including an SF Symphony-commissioned arrangement of Ricky Ian Gordon's "Litany" featured in SoundBox: Lineage, curated by Collaborative Partner Julia Bullock.

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

The San Francisco Symphony thanks those donors who contribute \$75 or more to the Symphony Fund. Their generosity has made it possible to share music through innovative programs, live and virtual events, music education programs, and our digital streaming service SFSymphony+. More than 30 new virtual membership events and opportunities were launched this season with nearly 3,000 guests in attendance.

Symphony 101

Hosted by Trinity College Professor of Music John Platoff, San Francisco Symphony Associate Principal Trombone Nick Platoff, and Senior Director of Orchestra Personnel and Education Planning Rebecca Blum, **Symphony 101** virtual events provided behind-the-scenes opportunities to learn more about different aspects of a symphony orchestra.

Composer Chats

Hosted by Bay Area pianist, writer, and producer Sarah Cahill and San Francisco Symphony Senior Director of Artistic Planning Phillipa Cole, **Composer Chats** highlighted foremost women composers throughout history. Contemporary composers Fang Man and Elizabeth Ogonek participated in discussions as part of the series, while other presentations focused on composers such as Barbara Strozzi, Louise Farrenc, Florence Price, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Gabriela Ortiz.

Music History Happy Hours

Led by musicologist and San Francisco Symphony Program Annotator James Keller and Symphony musicians, **Music History Happy Hours** provided a deep dive into the works of notable eras of orchestral music, as well as the lives of composers and musicians including Ludwig van Beethoven and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Virtual Salons

Virtual Salons provided guests the opportunity for intimate conversations with San Francisco Symphony leadership. Discussions focused on upcoming initiatives, including projects on SFSymphony+. Events also featured performances and Q&As with San Francisco Symphony musicians.

Music Director's Evening

Music Director's Evening featured Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and San Francisco Symphony leadership, a cameo by Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto, and a special brass quintet performance streamed live from the Wattis Room at Davies Symphony Hall.

MUSIC DIRECTOR'S EVENING WITH SF SYMPHONY MUSICIANS



EDUCATION

The San Francisco Symphony provides some of the most extensive education programs offered by any American orchestra. Throughout this year of distance learning, the Symphony worked closely with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and other educational partners to create digital programs that supported remote learning goals and kept music a vital part of students' lives.

Adventures in Music (AIM)

All 23,698 students in San Francisco's public elementary schools engaged with online musical video presentations and online lesson plans, keeping Adventures in Music (AIM) part of their digital classrooms.

In addition, 54 Bay Area classrooms, in 15 different cities outside of SFUSD, opted to implement AIM videos and supporting lesson plans as a distance-learning resource.

Music and Mentors

4,500 SF public middle and high school musicians participated in Music and Mentors, a program which provided online coaching and mentoring, as well as assistance with instrument purchases and repairs.

20 mentors were active in 22 band and orchestra programs at 15 SFUSD middle and high schools, coaching hundreds of music students online each week.

San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO)

100+ young musicians participated in pre-professional orchestral training through the tuition-free San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. Musicians came together for weekly online, interactive learning sessions led by Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Daniel Stewart, and a variety of guest artists, including Esa-Pekka Salonen.

A highlight of the season was the SFSYO's video recording of Mason Bates' *Mothership*, which can be viewed on the Symphony's YouTube channel.

Music Connects & Instrument of the Month

The SF Symphony introduced the digital Music Connects and Instrument of the Month programs, which offer a variety of content, activities, and lessons that support music education at home, garnering 26,000+ unique views.

ADVENTURES IN MUSIC



COMMUNITY

The San Francisco Symphony commits to providing compelling musical experiences that amplify and reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Bay Area.

The annual **All San Francisco Concert** is a special performance for San Francisco social service and neighborhood organizations. Elements of the All San Francisco Concert, including the presentation of the Ellen Magnin Newman Award to Hip Hop For Change, were incorporated into Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home.

Deck the Hall Community Day is a holiday tradition that treats 4,000 children, teachers, and chaperones to holiday concerts free of charge. The SF Symphony celebrated 40 years of Deck the Hall with a virtual celebration broadcast locally on NBC Bay Area and Telemundo and available for free streaming online.

Día de los Muertos concerts are a multidimensional immersion into the vibrant cultural traditions of the Latin American Day of the Dead holiday. This season's digital iteration of Día de los Muertos, hosted and curated by Martha Rodríguez-Salazar, was filmed in Spanish and English for television broadcast on NBC Bay Area and Telemundo.

The **2021 Chinese New Year Virtual Celebration: Year of the Ox** reimagined the Symphony's annual Lunar New Year concert for a digital medium. Host Joan Chen, conductor Ming Luke, SF Symphony musicians, and guest artists celebrated China's musical traditions in a dazzling program that highlighted themes of prosperity, unity, and growth.

The SF Symphony continued its **Music in the Wards** program with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital by offering performances for children, families, doctors, nurses, and administrators via Zoom each month.

400+ League Membership Volunteers belonging to seven leagues continued to meet virtually, successfully launching a Día de los Muertos pre-concert event and online auction, Deck the Hall pre- and post-concert events and online auction, and an online Spring Auction. Volunteers held additional virtual fundraising events, including wine tastings, a marketplace, and a four-session Music Study Series featuring SF Symphony pre-concert lecturers.

KHAFRE JAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HIP HOP FOR CHANGE (HIPHOPFORCHANGE.ORG)





FOR MORE INFORMATION

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You keep the music playing!**

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