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(High-resolution images of the San Francisco Symphony and guest artist headshots are available for download from the [Online Photo Library](#).)

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, DIRECTOR PETER SELLARS, AND THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY PRESENT NEW STAGED PRODUCTION OF IGOR STRAVINSKY'S *OEDIPUS REX* AND *SYMPHONY OF PSALMS*, JUNE 10–12, 2022

Oedipus rex features tenor Sean Panikkar (*Oedipus rex*); mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges (*Jocasta*), bass-baritone Sir Willard White (*Creon/Messenger/Tiresias*), tenor Jose Simerilla Romero (*Shepherd*), actor Breezy Leigh (*Antigone*), dancer Laurel Jenkins, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus

Performances mark first collaboration in new four-year partnership with acclaimed director Peter Sellars

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—On June 10–12, Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen returns to the San Francisco Symphony to lead a new staged production of Stravinsky’s *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms* in collaboration with acclaimed theater director Peter Sellars. These performances feature tenor Sean Panikkar in the title role, mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges as *Jocasta*, bass-baritone Sir Willard White as *Creon/Messenger/Tiresias*, tenor Jose Simerilla Romero as the *Shepherd*, actor Breezy Leigh as *Antigone*, dancer Laurel Jenkins, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. The Sellars-Salonen production also features visual design, in part informed by the sculptures of Ethiopian artist Elias Sime, which Sellars called “haunting and spiritually potent.”

This production marks the beginning of a recently announced new partnership between Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony with Peter Sellars to stage four large-scale works over four years, between 2022

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

and 2025. The program is also part of a larger focus on Stravinsky's music throughout the 2021–22 season, both through live concert performances and in digital content released on SFSymphony+, the orchestra's free online video streaming service.

***Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, June 10–12**

Oedipus rex and *Symphony of Psalms* are two key works from Stravinsky's neo-classical period and draw on the ritualistic nature of classical Greek theater and Judeo-Christian traditions, respectively. Composed in 1926–27, *Oedipus rex* is an opera-oratorio based on Sophocles' well-known Greek tragedy. With a text in Latin translated from a libretto by famed French writer Jean Cocteau, the fateful story of a heartbreaking prophecy come true is narrated in this version by Oedipus's daughter Antigone. Stravinsky composed *Symphony of Psalms* three years later, in 1929–30, during a time when he was renewing his faith in his Russian Orthodox roots. He had the project of composing psalm settings in mind for some time, and the opportunity arose with a commission from Serge Koussevitzky for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 50th anniversary. With no stipulations on the commission's form, Stravinsky used three familiar religious texts (Psalms 38, 39, and 150) with unique instrumentation, forgoing violins and violas in favor of the deeper strings, and a large chorus invoking the solemn and sonorous atmosphere of a church.

"This particular combination of two major Stravinsky pieces premiered in LA back in 2009," said Salonen of the pairing of *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*. "It was actually my farewell concert after 17 years with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Peter Sellars came up with this idea that there's this drama, and it ends with ascension. It ends with future. And in many ways, I thought that was very, very fitting. So, we did this production then, and since then it has traveled quite a bit."

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony's four-year partnership with Peter Sellars

The June 10–12 performances launch a four-year partnership with the Orchestra and revered theater and opera director Peter Sellars, staging four large-scale works between 2022 to 2025. "Peter has been my most frequent and most important collaborator in the world of theater and stage performances since we first worked together in 1992," said Salonen. "We have done countless things together—dramatized concerts, productions, and semi-staged performances. I'm very happy that this collaboration is continuing and developing through this four-year partnership."

On June 8, 10 & 11, 2023, Sellars directs a new staged production of Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*, the composer's second opera, an intensely moving work exploring the relationship between a mother and her son as they navigate a world rumbling with the threat of violence. Future seasons include new Peter Sellars-staged performances in 2024 of Olivier Messiaen's ambitious and evocative *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, one of his largest works featuring a chorus of 100; and in 2025 of Leoš Janáček's tragicomedy *The Cunning Little Vixen* featuring Collaborative Partner Julia Bullock in the titular role.

"I am very moved and excited to be able to create four major projects with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony early in their budding and flowering relationship," said Sellars. "Each of these four encounters will certainly be lifetime highlights for me and I hope they give the San Francisco Symphony and their public unforgettable, radically liberating, and profoundly refreshing experiences."

San Francisco Symphony and Stravinsky during the 2021–22 season

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony have performed a variety of works by Igor Stravinsky throughout the 2021–22 season, both on stage and via the Orchestra's free video streaming service, SFSymphony+.

In addition to the upcoming staged performances of *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms* on June 10–12, Salonen recently conducted the Orchestra in Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* and Violin Concerto, performed by Leila Josefowicz, on March 10–12, 2022. On June 1, Salonen and the Orchestra release a new hour-long concert film of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Soldier’s Tale*—conceived and directed by director, designer, and video artist Netia Jones—on SFSymphony+. The Orchestra has also released video performances of five Stravinsky chamber works during the 2021–22 season, available for free on-demand viewing on SFSymphony+:

[Divertimento for Violin and Piano](#) featuring Associate Principal Second Violin Helen Kim and pianist Keisuke Nakagoshi; [Concertino for String Quartet](#) featuring Associate Concertmaster Nadya Tichman, violinist Amy Hiraga, violist David Kim, and Associate Principal Cello Peter Wyrick; [Russian Maiden’s Song, from Mavra](#), featuring violinist Leor Maltinski and pianist Avi Downes; [Elegy for Solo Viola](#), performed by Principal Viola Jonathan Vinocour; and [Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet](#), performed by clarinetist Jerome Simas.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Tickets

Tickets for concerts at Davies Symphony can be purchased via sfsymphony.org or by calling the San Francisco Symphony Box Office at 415-864-6000.

Location

Davies Symphony Hall is located at 201 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

Health & Safety Information

Davies Symphony Hall is currently operating at full audience capacity. A face covering is required for entry into Davies Symphony Hall and must be worn at all times. The SF Symphony strongly recommends that patrons wear a non-vented respirator, such as an N95, KN95, or KF94 face mask. The San Francisco Symphony requires proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 for everyone entering Davies Symphony Hall ages 12 and up who’s eligible—including patrons, performers, volunteers, and staff. “Full vaccination” is defined as two weeks after completion of the two-dose regimen of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, one dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine, or other WHO authorized COVID-19 vaccine. At this time, proof of booster shots is not required. Patrons under age 12 must show proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test (PCR test taken within 2 days of event entry or antigen [rapid] test taken within 1 day of event entry).

For those patrons under age 12 who wish to show verification of a negative COVID-19 test result, the following are acceptable as proof: a printed document (from the test provider or laboratory); or an email, text message, web page, or application (app) screen displayed on a phone or mobile device from the test provider or laboratory. The information should include person’s name, type of test performed, negative test result, and date the test was administered. A photo verifying negative test results from a self-administered antigen [rapid] test taken within 1 day of event entry is also acceptable. Additionally, patrons may bring unopened at-home rapid tests with them to Davies Symphony Hall to take with a verified EMT present. Details about health and safety protocols at Davies Symphony Hall can be found [here](#).

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Stravinsky’s *Oedipus rex*

[Friday, June 10, 2022 at 7:30pm](#)

[Saturday, June 11, 2022 at 7:30pm](#)

[Sunday, June 12, 2022 at 2pm](#)

[Esa-Pekka Salonen](#) conductor

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

[Peter Sellars](#) director
[James F. Ingalls](#) lighting design
[Helene Siebrits](#) costume design
[Sean Panikkar](#) tenor (Oedipus)
[J’Nai Bridges](#) mezzo-soprano (Jocasta) [Orchestral Series Debut]
[Willard White](#) bass-baritone (Creon/Messenger/Tiresias)
[Jose Simerilla Romero](#) tenor (Shepherd) [Orchestral Series Debut]
[Breezy Leigh](#) actor (Antigone) [Orchestral Series Debut]
[Laurel Jenkins](#) dancer [Orchestral Series Debut]
San Francisco Symphony Chorus
San Francisco Symphony

IGOR STRAVINSKY *Oedipus rex* [staged]

IGOR STRAVINSKY *Symphony of Psalms* [staged]

Tickets: \$35–165.

Ticket link: <https://www.sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2021-22/STRAVINSKY-S-OEDIPUS-REX>

Pre-Concert Talk: Elizabeth Seitz will give an “Inside Music” talk from the stage one hour prior to the June 10–12 performances. Free to all concert ticket holders; doors open 15 minutes before.

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