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MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS AND THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY RELEASE BERLIOZ'S *ROMÉO ET JULIETTE* ON SFS MEDIA NOVEMBER 30, 2018

Vocalists include mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, tenor **Nicholas Phan**, and bass-baritone **Luca Pisaroni**, as well as the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, under the direction of **Ragnar Bohlin**

Double-disc album recorded in 24-bit/192kHz hi-resolution and available in 5.1 surround-capable SACD, download, and streaming via major retailers worldwide

Available for pre-order now at sfsymphony.org/berlioz



SAN FRANCISCO – Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT) and the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) announce the SFS Media release of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* on November 30. Recorded live at Davies Symphony Hall in June 2017, the album presents Hector Berlioz's musical adaption of Shakespeare's classic story of love and tragedy in a performance featuring Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano [Sasha Cooke](#), tenor [Nicholas Phan](#), and bass-baritone [Luca Pisaroni](#), as well as the [San Francisco Symphony Chorus](#) under the direction of [Ragnar Bohlin](#). Released in 5.1 surround-capable SACD set, this double-disc album is also available for download in Mastered for iTunes quality, 24-bit/192kHz Studio Master, and streaming via all major retailers. **For more information, audio samples, digital liner notes, and a video including performance footage and commentary by MTT, Sasha Cooke, and San Francisco Symphony Principal Viola Jonathan Vinocour, visit sfsymphony.org/berlioz.**

Michael Tilson Thomas explains: "*Roméo et Juliette* is one of a trio of works Berlioz wrote in his mid-30s inspired by his relationship with the Irish Shakespearean actress Harriet Smithson. *Roméo et Juliette* represents the years of bliss that they shared together. Even though the story is a tragic one, it gave Berlioz the opportunity to write some of the most impassioned love music of his life. He interweaves the chorus and soloists with the large orchestra in an utterly original way that sets up various scenes with his own words, and then produces music which describes what is taking place in that scene in a very cinematic way."

Mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**'s versatile repertoire and contemporary taste have won her an esteemed place in the hearts of the opera world. Deemed a "luminous standout" by the *New York Times*, she has become a frequent collaborator with MTT and the SFS, particularly known for her performances of the works of Mahler. Her most recent SFS performances have been as soloist in Mahler's Third Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*, and in semi-staged productions of Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*. Tenor **Nicholas Phan** has earned critical

acclaim for his topical solo albums including *Illuminations*, *Gods & Monsters*, and *A Painted Tale* and received a Grammy nomination for his 2010 recording of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His most recent SFS performance was as soloist in Stravinsky's *Perséphone*. Venezuelan-born Italian bass-baritone **Luca Pisaroni** made his San Francisco Symphony debut in 2015 as bass soloist in Stravinsky's ballet suite *Pulcinella*, followed by performances of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. He is renowned worldwide for his performances of operatic roles by Mozart, Rossini, and as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*.



Berlioz's Roméo et Juliette is a true sonic spectacular—the scale of the piece and the positioning of the large orchestra, very large chorus, and soloists is extraordinary. This recording allows all of these wonderful forces to be heard clearly and with incredible majesty.” —Michael Tilson Thomas



[SFS Media](#) is the San Francisco Symphony's award-winning in-house label, launched in 2001. SFS Media releases reflect MTT and the SFS's artistic vision of showcasing music by American composers as well as core classical masterworks and embody the broad range of programming that has been a hallmark of the MTT/SFS partnership. Recorded live in concert and engineered at Davies Symphony Hall, the audio recordings are released on hybrid SACD and in high-resolution digital formats. SFS Media has garnered eight Grammy awards. SFS Media also produces and releases documentary and live performance videos, including the SFS's national public television series and multimedia project *Keeping Score*, which included three seasons of television episodes, eight documentaries, and eight concert films designed to make classical music more accessible to people of all ages and musical backgrounds. The *Keeping Score* series is now available as a digital download and on DVD and Blu-ray. Other videos of the San Francisco Symphony available from SFS Media include *A Celebration of Leonard Bernstein: Opening Night at Carnegie Hall 2008* and *San Francisco Symphony at 100*, a documentary about the Symphony's history, which won a Northern California Emmy Award.

To request a digital review copy of the recording, email the San Francisco Symphony Public Relations Department at publicrelations@sfsymphony.org.

Berlioz *Roméo et Juliette* is available through digital outlets worldwide including [iTunes](#), [Amazon](#), [AppleMusic](#) [Spotify](#), [Primephonic](#), [HDTracks](#) and [Qobuz](#). All SFS Media physical recordings are also available from the Symphony Store in Davies Symphony Hall, as well as from all major retailers. Global distribution of all SFS Media products is managed by Warner Classics Label Services.

Title: Berlioz *Roméo et Juliette*

Composer: Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

Artists: San Francisco Symphony
Michael Tilson Thomas, Music Director
Sasha Cooke mezzo-soprano
Nicholas Phan tenor
Luca Pisaroni bass-baritone
San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Ragnar Bohlin director

Work: *Roméo et Juliette*, Opus 17

Recorded: June 28–July 1, 2017. All works recorded in PCM and 24-bit/192kHz audio live in Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco.

Label: SFS Media

Catalogue Number: SFS 0074

Release Date: November 30, 2018

Total Run Time: 01:44:31

Description: Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony bring unsurpassed storytelling and musicality to their latest recording on the Grammy Award-winning SFS Media label: Berlioz’s dramatic symphony *Roméo et Juliette*. With a narrative that Berlioz deemed “too beautiful, too musical” to not be performed, this impassioned orchestral scoring of love and despair is further enriched by the vocals of Sasha Cooke, Nicholas Phan, Luca Pisaroni, and the SFS Chorus. Available in studio master-quality on two-disc SACD and for digital download and streaming.

Media copies: Members of the press may request physical and digital review copies, high-res live performance photos, and digital CD booklet from the San Francisco Symphony Public Relations Department at publicrelations@sfsymphony.org

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