



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

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**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY AND ESA-PEKKA SALONEN RELEASE
STRAVINSKY: *THE SOLDIER'S TALE*, A NEW HOUR-LONG
THEATRICAL CONCERT FILM, AVAILABLE ON SFSYMPHONY+
BEGINNING JUNE 1, 2022**

Stravinsky: *The Soldier's Tale* was conceived and directed by acclaimed British director, designer, and video artist Netia Jones, as a new work of digital music theater

***The Soldier's Tale* is conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and features seven San Francisco Symphony musicians, actor Bruce Davison, and Alonzo King LINES Ballet dancer Adjii Cissoko**

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**Press interested in an advance copy of Stravinsky: *The Soldier's Tale* can email
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SAN FRANCISCO, CA—On June 1, 2022, Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony release a new concert film of Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* on the

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Orchestra's free video streaming service, SFSymphony+. The hour-long film was conceived and directed by acclaimed British director, designer, and video artist Netia Jones, inspired by the 1921 Russian abstract art exhibition *5x5=25*. The release is one of Salonen and the Symphony's key signature digital projects in the 2021–22 season aimed at expanding the possibilities of the orchestral experience through digital collaboration.

Stravinsky designed *The Soldier's Tale*—a Faustian, anti-war, anti-greed piece that tells the story of a soldier who gives his prized fiddle to the devil in exchange for a book that will provide him “wealth untold”—as a theatrical work “to be read, played, and danced” with an intentionally small ensemble that could easily travel. In addition to Salonen, who conducts the performance, *The Soldier's Tale* features actor Bruce Davison as the narrator, soldier, and devil; Alonzo King LINES Ballet dancer Adjii Cissoko; and seven San Francisco Symphony musicians: Concertmaster Alexander Barantschik, Principal Bass Scott Pingel, Principal Clarinet Carey Bell, Principal Bassoon Stephen Paulson, Associate Principal Trumpet Aaron Schuman, Principal Trombone Timothy Higgins, and Principal Percussion Jacob Nissly.

The Soldier's Tale debuted near the end of World War I and during the influenza pandemic—striking parallels between Stravinsky's world in 1918 and the world today. “I've always wanted to do a proper studio production of *Soldier's Tale*, because it's one of my favorite pieces and deserves a very well-thought-out, detailed production,” said Salonen. “Between the fact that it represents a new era in composition—and in the arts more generally—coupled with the Influenza pandemic, which was a big factor in driving all these changes, you cannot help but to draw parallels between that and our time. A hundred years earlier, Stravinsky was going through the same experiences in his life as we are now in our lives, and that's almost spooky.”

Stravinsky worked on the libretto, which is based on a Russian folk tale by Alexander Afanasyev called *The Runaway Soldier and the Devil*, with Swiss writer C. F. Ramuz. The work was originally intended for a narrator and two actors, but for this production, Netia Jones worked with a single actor—acclaimed film and television star Bruce Davison—to portray all three speaking roles. “Part of the concept is that this is a very dirty pact with the devil, but the devil is actually part of an internal subconscious. And Bruce Davison—who better to embody this kind of multilayered personality? He's utterly virtuosic and extremely fluent, so what I was working towards with Bruce is the idea that *The Soldier's Tale* is actually about one person.”

Filmed in March 2022 in the San Francisco Symphony's SoundBox performance space and a studio in Richmond, CA, the production is multidimensional, with large screens surrounding the musicians projecting dancer Adjii Cissoko's improvised choreography throughout the film. “We only see Adjii in 2D, but I feel that her presence is very 3D,” said Jones. “She brings a lot of life, and she represents light and hope, and it is a piece that, fundamentally, is about the loss of hope or a kind of resilience and the struggle.”

[Click here](#) for a behind-the-scenes feature that explores the making of the project, featuring interviews with Esa-Pekka Salonen, Netia Jones, Bruce Davison, Adjii Cissoko, and Aaron Schuman.

“*The Soldier's Tale* has a very interesting place in history because it represents a complete change of paradigm,” said Salonen. “The opulent post-Romantic, late-Romantic era has come to a very violent and abrupt end: the world has experienced the first World War, the world has

experienced a pandemic, and the new art looks very different, and sounds very different. It deals with contemporary issues, sometimes in an allegorical way, and there's a sort of an ironic and distant approach to things. *The Soldier's Tale* is thoroughly modern, and it represents the new era.”

[Click here](#) to access the online press kit, which includes a promotional video, artist headshots, behind-the-scenes photos, and video graphics.

San Francisco Symphony and Stravinsky during the 2021-22 season

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Orchestra perform a variety of works by Igor Stravinsky throughout the 2021–22 season. On June 10–12, Salonen leads a new staged production that pairs Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*. Esa-Pekka Salonen's first staged production with the San Francisco Symphony, *Oedipus Rex* is conceived by director Peter Sellars and Salonen, and features 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, actress Breezy Leigh as Antigone, dancer Laurel Jenkins, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Salonen also conducted the Orchestra in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Violin Concerto, performed by Leila Josefowicz, on March 10–12, 2022.

In addition to *The Soldier's Tale*, the San Francisco Symphony has released video performances of five Stravinsky chamber works during the 2021–22 season, available for 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.

About Netia Jones

Netia Jones is a British director/designer and video artist working internationally in opera, staged concerts, performance, and installation, using video, film, and projected media in all of her work. A “leading video pioneer” (*The Times*) “bringing intelligence and integrity to the task of bringing video into classical music” (*The Guardian*), she is director of Lightmap, a mixed media partnership with whom she has created video, film, installation, and interactive media projects in the UK, US, and Europe, from large scale external projection mapping to multi projector integrated film in opera performances.

Additional SFSymphony+ 2021–22 Digital Releases

Stravinsky: *The Soldier's Tale* is the second of two digital signature projects led by Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen to be released on SFSymphony+ this season. In January 2022, Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony released [LIGETI: PARADIGMS](#), their first digital signature project—a performance merging avant-garde classical music and Artificial Intelligence (AI), created in partnership with media artist Refik Anadol, Dolby Laboratories, and SF Symphony Collaborative Partner Carol Reiley.

In September 2021, the Symphony released three new programs: [SoundBox: Delirium](#), curated by pianist Jeremy Denk; [CURRENTS: Niji 虹 \(Rainbow\)](#), curated by koto master Shirley Kazuyo

Muramoto; and Robert Schumann's [Symphony No. 3, Rhenish](#), conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. Other highlights of the 2021–22 SFSymphony+ season include [Deck the Hall](#), a digital holiday program for children released in December; a chamber program featuring pianist [Jean-Yves Thibaudet and SF Symphony Musicians](#) performing works by Gabriel Fauré, Antonín Dvořák, George Gershwin, and Jimmy Van Heusen (arr. Bill Evans); SF Symphony musicians performing chamber works of Igor Stravinsky; and performances by San Francisco Symphony musicians of works by Giovanni Gabrieli, Charles Ives, Jessie Montgomery, and Richard Strauss.

About SFSymphony+

SFSymphony+ (SFSymphony Plus) is the San Francisco Symphony's free on-demand video streaming service, launched in February 2021. All content released during the 2020–21 season remains available for viewing on SFSymphony+. This includes seven SoundBox programs; eight episodes of CURRENTS; Esa-Pekka Salonen's first digital project as Music Director, Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home; and Playing Changes, presented in partnership with Post:ballet.

SFSymphony+ is available for free browser-based streaming worldwide on sfsymphonyplus.org, via TV services including Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Chromecast, Roku, and smart TVs, and can be downloaded as an app via [Apple App Store](#), [Amazon Firestick](#), [Google Play – Android](#), and [Google Play – TV](#).

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