



SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

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[The San Francisco Symphony](#) (SFS), widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the U.S., celebrated its 20th season with Music Director [Michael Tilson Thomas](#) (MTT) in the 2014-15 season. The SF Symphony was established by a group of San Francisco citizens, music-lovers, and musicians in the wake of the 1906 earthquake, and played its first concert on December 8, 1911. Almost immediately, it revitalized the City's cultural life. The San Francisco Symphony has grown in stature and acclaim under a succession of distinguished music directors: American composer Henry Hadley, Alfred Hertz (who led the American premieres of *Parsifal*, *Salome*, and *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Metropolitan Opera), Basil Cameron, Issay Dobrowen, the legendary Pierre Monteux (who introduced the world to *Le Sacre du printemps* and *Petrushka*), Enrique Jordá, Josef Krips, Seiji Ozawa, Edo de Waart, Herbert Blomstedt (now Conductor Laureate), and current Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. The SFS presents more than 220 concerts annually, and reaches an audience of nearly 600,000 in its home of Davies Symphony Hall, through its multifaceted education and community programs, and on national and international tours.

Since Tilson Thomas assumed his post as the SFS's eleventh Music Director in September 1995, he and the San Francisco Symphony have formed a musical partnership hailed as one of the most inspiring and successful in the country. His tenure with the Orchestra has been praised for outstanding musicianship, innovative programming, highlighting the works of American composers, and bringing new audiences to classical music. In addition, the Orchestra has been recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in music education and digital technology to make classical music available worldwide to as many people as possible. MTT is now the longest-tenured music director for a major American orchestra, and the longest-serving music director in the San Francisco Symphony's history.

In its 2011-12 Centennial season the SFS reprised its acclaimed *American Mavericks* festival by pioneering modern American composers, featuring the world premieres of four commissioned works in two weeks of concerts at Davies Symphony Hall and on a two-week national tour, including four performances at Carnegie Hall. The San Francisco Symphony regularly mounts special semi-staged productions with multimedia, hosted and curated by MTT. In May 2016, MTT led the SFS and an all-star Broadway cast in an original semi-staged concert production of Leonard Bernstein's *On the Town*, and in January 2017 MTT and the SFS present semi-staged performances of Mahler's *Das klagende Lied*. Other specially staged performances have included Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, John Cage's *Renga*, Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and the first live concert performances of the complete score from Bernstein's *West Side Story*, recorded and released on SFS Media.

In December 2014, MTT and the SF Symphony launched SoundBox, a new experimental performance venue and late-night live music series located in a rehearsal space behind Davies Symphony Hall that has been transformed into a lounge/nightclub. SoundBox features casual seating, a full bar, and a state-of-the-art Meyer Constellation sound system. All SoundBox performances have been sold to capacity and continue to receive national critical acclaim. SoundBox continues with 10 more performances in the 2016-17 season.

Since 1996, when Tilson Thomas led the Orchestra on the first of their more than 30 tours together, they have continued an ambitious yearly touring schedule that takes them to Europe, Asia and throughout the United States. In November 2016 they returned to Asia for a two-week tour performing Mahler's Symphony No. 1, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, Stravinsky's *The Firebird* Suite and *Le Chant du rossignol*, Shostakovich's Piano concerto No. 1 with pianist Yuja Wang, SFS-commissioned *Dream of the Red Chamber* Overture by Bright Sheng, and MTT's own *Agnegram*. The tour included concerts in Tainan, Taipei, Shanghai,

Beijing, Osaka, and Tokyo, as well as SF Symphony's first-ever appearance in Seoul, South Korea. In April 2016, MTT and the SFS performed in Carnegie Hall, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and the Kennedy Center as part of their East Coast Tour. Two years earlier, in March 2014, their three-week European tour, performing repertoire from the SFS Media catalogue including Ives's *A Concord Symphony*, Mahler's Symphony No. 3, and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, earned them an ASCAP award for Adventurous Programming – American Programming on Foreign Tours. In 2012, they performed a two-week national *American Mavericks* tour and a two-week tour of Asia with pianist Yuja Wang in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Taipei, and Macau. In 2011, they made a three-week tour of Europe, culminating in Vienna with performances of three Mahler symphonies to commemorate the anniversaries of the composer's birth and death. Other recent touring highlights include a three-week 2007 European tour that featured two televised appearances at the BBC Proms in London and concerts at several other major European festivals.

The Orchestra's recording series on SFS Media continues to reflect the artistic identity of its programming, its commitment to performing the work of American maverick composers alongside that of the core classical masterworks. The San Francisco Symphony has recorded works from the *American Mavericks* Festival concerts by Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and Edgard Varèse with pianist Jeremy Denk and organist Paul Jacobs, and won a 2013 Best Orchestral Performance Grammy award for its recording of John Adams's *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*. Its 2014 release of *West Side Story* debuted at #1 on the *Billboard* and iTunes Classical Music charts. In 2014, in honor of his 20th season with the Orchestra, MTT and the SFS released *Masterpieces in Miniature*, a recording of short orchestral works close to MTT's heart, including Henry Litolf's Scherzo from *Concerto symphonique* No. 4 featuring pianist Yuja Wang. Tilson Thomas and the Orchestra have recorded all nine of Gustav Mahler's symphonies, the Adagio from the unfinished Symphony No. 10, and the composer's works for voices, chorus, and orchestra on SFS Media. Their 2009 recording with the SFS Chorus of Mahler's sweeping Symphony No. 8, *Symphony of a Thousand*, and the Adagio from Symphony No. 10 won three Grammy awards, including Best Classical Album and Best Choral Performance. Other significant recordings include scenes from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, a collection of Stravinsky ballets, a Gershwin collection, *Charles Ives: An American Journey*, and John Adams's *Grand Pianola Music* and *Absolute Jest*, among others. In addition to 15 Grammy awards, seven of them for the Mahler recording cycle, the SFS has won some of the world's most prestigious recording awards, including Japan's Record Academy Award, France's Grand Prix du Disque, and Germany's ECHO Klassik Award. Their live concert recording of Mason Bates's *Works for Orchestra*, released in March 2016, was nominated for a 2017 Grammy Award in the category of Best Orchestral Performance. SF Symphony's most recent recording came out in October 2016 – it is an all-Debussy album, which includes Debussy's *Images pour orchestre*, *Jeux*, and *La plus que lente*. SFS Media celebrates its 15th anniversary during the 2016-17 season.

Tilson Thomas and the SFS launched the national *Keeping Score* PBS television series and multimedia project in 2006 to help make classical music more accessible to people of all ages and musical backgrounds. The project, an unprecedented undertaking among orchestras, is anchored by eight one-hour composer documentaries, hosted by Tilson Thomas, and eight live concert films; it also includes www.keepingsscore.org, an innovative website to explore and learn about music; a national radio series; documentary and live performance Blu-ray, DVD and CDs; and an education program for K-12 schools to further teaching through the arts by integrating classical music into core subjects. More than six million people have seen the *Keeping Score* television series, and the radio series has been broadcast on almost 100 stations nationally.

The San Francisco Symphony provides the most extensive education programs offered by any American orchestra today. In 1988, the Symphony established *Adventures in Music* (AIM), a free, comprehensive music education program that reaches every first- through fifth-grade child in the San Francisco Unified School District. The SFS Instrument Training and Support program reaches students in San Francisco public middle and high schools with instrumental music programs, providing coaching by professional musicians. In 2014 it revitalized its children's music education website, www.sfskids.org, in conjunction with the UC Irvine Center for Computer Games and Virtual Worlds. The SFS also offers opportunities to hear and learn about great music through its programs *Concerts for Kids*, *Music for Families*, the internationally-acclaimed SFS Youth Orchestra, and annual free and community concerts.