



SAN FRANCISCO  
SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

## **San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra performed its inaugural concert in January 1982 and has become known around the world. The ensemble has toured Europe and Asia, given sold-out concerts in such legendary halls as Berlin's Philharmonie, Vienna's Musikverein, Saint Petersburg's Mariinsky Theater, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and won first prize in Vienna's International Youth and Music Festival. It has performed for Queen Elizabeth II of England and been featured on BBC radio. In the summer of 1996, to open the San Francisco Symphony's historic American Festival, the Youth Orchestra was featured with members of the Grateful Dead in music of John Cage, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. The SFSYO was organized during the summer of 1981, when eighty-five musicians aged eleven to twenty, and representing communities from Napa to Santa Cruz, were selected after twelve days of auditions. The first music director was Jahja Ling. Over the years, Ling was succeeded as music director by David Milnes, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, Edwin Outwater, Benjamin Shwartz, and Donato Cabrera. In 2016, Christian Reif was appointed as the San Francisco Symphony's Resident Conductor and Wattis Foundation Youth Orchestra Music Director. Today, 108 musicians, chosen from more than 300 applicants per season, perform with the Youth Orchestra. The ensemble made its first tour of Europe in 1986 and in summer 2015 embarked on its tenth tour abroad. The YO's 2012 performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 1 at the Berlin Philharmonie was recorded and released on SFS Media. The orchestra returns to Europe for a tour in summer 2019. As part of the Youth Orchestra's innovative rehearsal program, members of the San Francisco Symphony coach the players each Saturday afternoon in sectional rehearsals. Following these sessions, the entire Youth Orchestra rehearses under Christian Reif. Youth Orchestra members regularly meet and work with world-renowned artists: Michael Tilson Thomas, Herbert Blomstedt, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Yo-Yo Ma, Valery Gergiev, Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Wynton Marsalis, Midori, Joshua Bell, Mstislav Rostropovich, Simon Rattle, and many others have worked with the Youth Orchestra—performing, explaining phrasing, and demonstrating musical passages and nuances. Of equal importance, Youth Orchestra members are able to speak with these prominent musicians about their professional and personal experiences, and about music. The Youth Orchestra is committed to the Bay Area community. It has opened the Stern Grove Festival three times, performed for patients at Laguna Honda Hospital, played a benefit for Stanford Children's Hospital, given an Earthquake Relief Concert for the Hollister School of the Arts, and performed at the opening of San Francisco's Main Library. In January 2018, the YO hosted the seventh Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival, presenting colleague ensembles on the stage of Davies Symphony Hall and benefitting organizations dedicated to the needs of underserved youth.