



SAN FRANCISCO
SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR



West Side Story **Recording on SFS Media** **Press Quotes**

“Do we need another recording of “West Side Story” performed by a full symphonic orchestra? Absolutely when it’s this one...The symphonic richness of the playing is an asset. But even better is the stylish naturalness and clarity that Mr. Thomas draws from the players, and the inspired cast.”

- [Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times*](#)

“After only a few tracks it is clear that this is the most lyrical, orchestrally sophisticated, sensual, even emotional version of the musical that has ever been recorded...The *West Side Story* score has probably never been performed as elegantly, aesthetically, or at such a high musical level...MTT’s version is the most lyrical, the most beautiful and refined, the most emotional *West Side Story* that has ever been recorded. The cast is overall excellent, the San Francisco Symphony’s playing is outstanding.”

- [Remy Franck, *Pizzicato \(Luxembourg\)*](#)

“MTT captures the work’s sophistication, stylishness, spontaneity, and sheer, easy melodic flow, while the playing of the San Francisco Symphony is simply beyond criticism. You won’t hear the orchestral numbers—the dances in the gym, or the ballet sequence in Act 2—done better, anywhere.”

- [David Hurwitz, *Classics Today*](#)

“This new recording... trumps [the two previous recordings of this evergreen musical] and confirms *West Side Story* as one of the masterpieces of musical theater and a great operatic score in its own right.... This is a recording that will blow your socks off.”

- Rupert Christiansen, *The Daily Telegraph* (UK)

“A landmark recording of an enduring classic. 5 stars”

- [Andy Gill, *Independent*](#) (U.K.)

“At last, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Michael Tilson Thomas and the wonderful players of the San Francisco Symphony we have a definitive recording of the first-ever concert performance of Bernstein’s complete Broadway score for *West Side Story* ... it is doubtful whether any conductor today could have brought this project to fruition with such overwhelming success.

MTT has chosen a terrific cast of young singing actors for this recording... It would not be possible to pour too much praise on the playing of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra under the gripping direction of their musical director. They provide a level of polish and accomplishment that any theatre pit band could only dream of yet can really swing in the jazzy numbers such as ‘The Dance at the Gym’ and ‘Cool’... The presentation of these two SACDs is as classy as the musical content found on them.” 5 stars

- [Graham Williams SA-CD.net](#) (UK)

“...the vitality of the playing is enthralling. At the same time there’s a bloom and finesse about the sound...persistent fizz plus elegantly telling instrumental details. It’s always impressive and always clean”

- [Geoff Brown, *The Times* \(UK\)](#)

"When MTT lets his San Franciscans off the leash in the 'Mambo' and 'Jump' sections of the 'Dance at the Gym' they are smoking hot."

- Ed Seckerson, *Gramophone* (UK)

"The [San Francisco Symphony] and Chorus are brilliant under Tilson Thomas who opts for just-right tempos and orchestral balance, and handles the syncopated rhythms brilliantly. There will be no reason to record this great work again."

- Robert Levine, *Stereophile*

"The orchestra sounds splendid, especially the percussion section, and the cast - led by the great Cheyenne Jackson as Tony - is almost uniformly strong. And "Somewhere," sung with limpid grace by soprano Julia Bullock (whose career has taken off since last year) sounds as beautiful as ever."

- [Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*](#)

"An excellent cast of Broadway voices... Luxurious sound...Great claims for character and authenticity... An exciting addition to the work's discography...Luxuriously packaged"

- [Andrew MacGregor, *BBC Radio 3*](#) (UK)

"Not only here does the orchestra give a brilliant performance with impeccable ensemble playing. It is as though every single musician had breathed the multicultural New York air since childhood. Michael Tilson Thomas has been the orchestra's Music Director for 20 years – he was a close friend of Bernstein. In their interpretation, he, the chorus, and his orchestra have simply wiped away the patina of the past six decades. The textures of the score, its tremendous delicacy, and the emotional power of the melodies are revealed again."

- NDR.de (German Public Radio)

"Michael Tilson Thomas understands Bernstein's music as well as anyone alive... This *West Side Story* is an outstanding achievement... the whole experience is engrossing and it is caught in excellent clear sound throughout... Absolutely not to be missed by anyone who cares about this great musical."

- Nigel Simeone, *International Record Review* (UK)

"This could be the best pit band in recorded history. Well sung and the playing is magnificent... a superb set – handsomely presented and well recorded"

- [Graham Rickson, *TheArtsDesk.com*](#) (UK)

"Stunningly played by the San Francisco Symphony... beautiful"

- Richard Morrison, *The Times* (UK)

"Scores heavily with its casting... Chorus convincingly represents the warring streets gangs...orchestra swings like the biggest of big bands."

- Anthony Burton, *BBC Music*

"A spiritual and almost indescribable beauty... massive, exhaustive, and thrilling... Sumptuous, emotive, and complete, SFS's release deserves its place right next to that time-honored 1957 recording."

- [Tony Frankel, *Stage and Cinema*](#)

"...one of the loveliest recordings of the score you'll ever hear...phenomenal and altogether triumphant...truly a collector's dream and something that even a casual fan of musicals will enjoy and appreciate"

- [David Clarke, *Broadwayworld.com*](#)

"...the best 'concert version' of *West Side Story* on disc. It has all of the music, the original Broadway orchestrations, theatrical immediacy, and vivid, lifelike surround-sound engineering...Tilson Thomas conducts the orchestral dances and interludes with both meticulous detail and joyful zest."

- J.D. *Listen Magazine*

"This complete recording of Bernstein's iconic masterpiece...may very well stand out as the most important.... In no recording has this music been played with such precision and spirit....Not only is this the best performance of this music on record, but it is undoubtedly the best sounding."

- [Matthew Richard Martinez, *Concertonet.com*](#)

"No one appears to get Lenny better than MTT at this point in time, and Jamie Bernstein, the composer's eldest daughter, states that he knows her father's score "the way he knows his own heart.' ... We are left with gratitude to MTT and his winning approach to the music itself...The SFS confidently emulates everything from a cool Third Stream jazz ensemble to a pit band, a jukebox, and the rich smoothness of a big ballet orchestra....Listeners to the new SFS Media release will think it is not only a treat, but also a wonderful gift to everyone with a life-long love of Bernstein's legendary score."

- [Phil Campbell, *Bay Area Reporter*](#)

"San Francisco Symphony's new release of *West Side Story* is the most significant recording of Leonard Bernstein's musical theatre masterpiece since the original Broadway cast recording of 1957...his beautifully engineered 2-disc recording captures the spectacular sound and riveting flow of energy I recall from the opening night performance....Michael Tilson Thomas is internationally renowned for his mastery of the Bernstein repertoire. Under his 20-year leadership, the San Francisco Symphony has triumphed as a world class orchestra and one that thrives on diversity. With *West Side Story* comes a spirituality and connection to the composer that exposes fresh information and scintillating nuance around every corner."

- [Sean Martinfield, *Examiner.com*](#)

"The best recording of *West Side Story* that will ever be recorded. Period....Bernstein's greatest achievement as a composer, and this recording proves just how great. "

- [Donald Venezia, *Port Washington Patch \(NY\)*](#)

"A Brashly Invigorating Performance... The music of *West Side Story* sounds grippingly urgent and colorful as ever in the hands of one of America's best orchestras and conductors."

- [Jonathan Blumhofer, *ArtsFuse.org*](#) (Boston)

"This San Francisco Symphony recording of *West Side Story* is a gift of enduring love and craft for all who hold the musical in a special place in memory and heart. It is a must-have for musical theatre lovers."

- David Roberts, *Theatre Reviews Limited*

"...it's hard not to be swept along by the drama of the piece and the sheer quality of the performances"

- Andrew Everard, *Gramophone* (UK)

"In every way, therefore, this release oozes class."

- [John Quinn, MusicWebInternational](#)

"With spine-tingling singing from artists who find that rarely visited spot between Grand Opera and Broadway, among them British-trained Alexandra Silber as Maria, and Jessica Vosk as Anita, even without Jerome Robbins' scintillating choreography, this is a witty, passionate drama"

- Claudia Pritchard, *Independent on Sunday* (UK)

"Tilson Thomas's .. San Francisco Symphony gives this magnificent musical the full symphonic heft it deserves, but he has cast (as he puts it in the accompanying interview) singing actors, all of whom hit the stylistic nail on the head, sounding superbly musical on one hand, completely natural and unaffected on the other."

- Joshua Rosenblum, *Opera News*

"...in this recording [*West Side Story*] seems as fresh as it did on the first day.... Michael Tilson Thomas and his San Francisco Symphony manage all the musical idioms that Bernstein used to depict New York's colorful street life with extreme confidence and marvelous flexibility.... All in sound quality that is amazing for a live recording, and with a lavish booklet."

- Eckhard Weber, *Concerti* (Germany)

"Great music, great orchestra, great conductor."

- *Broadway World*

"Splendid"

- *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Phenomenal"

- *Broadway Radio*

"Smoking hot"

- *Gramophone*

"The greatest way to hear this music..Such a treat"

- Jamie Bernstein

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