



Contact:

Public Relations

San Francisco Symphony

(415) 503-5474

publicrelations@sfsymphony.org

sfsymphony.org/press

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ESA-PEKKA SALONEN AND THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY CLOSE 2024–25 SEASON MAY 23–JUNE 14 WITH FOUR PROGRAMS CELEBRATING SALONEN’S IMPACTFUL FIVE-YEAR TENURE AS MUSIC DIRECTOR

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—This May and June, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony close out the 2024–25 season with four dynamic programs, marking the culmination of Salonen’s influential five-year tenure as Music Director.

May 23–25, Salonen conducts the first San Francisco Symphony performances of *Chorale* by Magnus Lindberg, one of Salonen’s longtime friends and collaborators. The six-minute work is based on the familiar Bach chorale “*Es ist genug*.” Isabelle Faust joins Salonen and the Orchestra to perform Alban Berg’s Violin Concerto, which the composer dedicated to the memory of Manon Gropius, the daughter of Gustav Mahler’s widow, who passed away at 18 years old. The program closes with Igor Stravinsky’s vibrant *The Firebird*, based on Russian folklore. Released on Apple Music Classical in 2024, Salonen and the SF Symphony’s live concert recording of *The Firebird* was nominated for the 2025 Grammy® Award for Best Orchestral Performance.

May 29–30 & June 1, Salonen leads the Orchestra in Ludwig van Beethoven’s relaxed and cheerful Symphony No. 4, originally commissioned for a Silesian count. Robert Schumann poetically captured the Fourth’s relationship to its more heavyweight neighbors when he called it

“a slender Grecian maiden between two Nordic giants.” Hilary Hahn joins Salonen and the Orchestra for Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, his only violin concerto. The concerto was seldom performed during Beethoven’s lifetime but was later rescued from obscurity by violinist Joseph Joachim and composer/conductor Felix Mendelssohn.

The following week, **June 6–8**, Salonen conducts the San Francisco Symphony in the world premiere of *Rewilding*, a new work by composer Gabriella Smith inspired by her work in ecological restoration. Rewilding is a form of ecological restoration that turns areas transformed by humans back into functioning natural ecosystems. “Throughout my life, I’ve worked on many different rewilding projects around the world, the most recent being on a former airplane runway in Seattle,” said Smith. “There are so many beneficial environmental results of rewilding, but the one that keeps me coming back is pleasure: the pleasure of getting my hands in the dirt, of hearing northern flickers and Bewick’s wrens, of biking to and from the site (another climate solution that consistently brings me joy), and the pleasure of being part of something bigger.” The program also features Jean Sibelius’s Symphony No. 7, the composer’s final symphony, as well as two of Richard Strauss’s tone poems—*Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks*.

In connection with Gabriella Smith’s *Rewilding*, “Composing the World,” a new lobby exhibit, will be on display in the Davies Symphony Hall First Tier lobby in June. “Composing the World” explores the creative processes of Gabriella Smith and Xavier Muzik—two composers who transform their surroundings into music in strikingly different but equally profound ways. Salonen and the Orchestra also gave the world premiere of Xavier Muzik’s *Strange Beasts* in February 2025.

Salonen’s tenure as Music Director culminates **June 12–14** as he conducts the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus—together with soprano Heidi Stober and mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke—in Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, a realization of the composer’s views on universal themes of life, death, and resurrection.

Salonen and SF Symphony release four new recordings on Apple Music Classical

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony are scheduled to release four new spatial audio recordings via the Apple Music Classical app in the coming months. Recordings include Sibelius’s *Finlandia* (to be released May 23) and Symphony No. 1 (to be released August 15), both recorded live in concert March 14–16, 2024; Stravinsky’s Symphony in Three Movements (to be released July 4), recorded live in concert November 11–12, 2023; and Salonen’s Cello Concerto (to be released late summer; date to be announced), recorded live in concert October 18–20, 2024, with SF Symphony Principal Cellist Rainer Eudeikis (Philip S. Boone Chair) as soloist.

With Apple Music Classical, Apple Music subscribers can easily find any recording in the world’s largest classical music catalog with fully optimized search; enjoy the highest audio quality available and experience many classical favorites in a whole new way with immersive Spatial Audio; browse expertly curated playlists, insightful composer biographies, and descriptions of thousands of works; and more. [Apple Music Classical](#) is available on the App Store and is included at no extra cost with nearly all Apple Music subscriptions. The combination of Apple Music Classical and Apple Music provides a complete music experience for everyone, from longtime classical fans to first-time listeners, and everyone in between.

Highlights of Esa-Pekka Salonen's tenure as Music Director

Esa-Pekka Salonen was announced as the San Francisco Symphony's 12th Music Director in 2018 alongside the appointment of eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of disciplines—Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. Salonen began his tenure as Music Director in the fall of 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown. With the Orchestra, he brought audiences numerous innovative online projects, including *Throughline—From Hall to Home*, Stravinsky: *The Soldier's Tale*, SoundBox programs released via streaming service SFSymphony+, and a digital performance of three works by György Ligeti with imagery generated by Artificial Intelligence in collaboration with visual artist Refik Anadol. In May 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions were loosened, he conducted his first live, in-person performances as Music Director at Davies Symphony Hall and at Stanford University's Frost Amphitheater. In the 2021–22 season, the SF Symphony launched Salonen's first complete performing season with a celebratory opening week of performances highlighted by the San Francisco Symphony's Reopening Night Gala featuring esperanza spalding and the San Francisco-based contemporary ballet company Alonzo King LINES Ballet, which was recorded for *Great Performances* on PBS.

Since becoming Music Director, Salonen has conducted world premieres of works by composers including Samuel Adams, Fang Man, Anders Hillborg, Jens Ibsen, Magnus Lindberg, Jesper Nordin, and Trevor Weston, as well as United States premieres of works by Bryce Dessner, Hannah Kendall, and Daniel Kidane. See a [full list](#) of Salonen-led premieres. Salonen's tenure has been marked by deep partnerships and continued collaborations with luminaries from across classical music, dance, theater, visual art, and more, including stagings of Igor Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*, Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*, and Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* with acclaimed director Peter Sellars; collaborations with choreographer Alonzo King and LINES Ballet for performances of Alberto Ginastera's *Estancia* Suite and Maurice Ravel's *Ma Mère l'Oye*; a two-week residency by pianist Igor Levit, highlighted by performances of Busoni's Piano Concerto; a multisensory production of Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus, The Poem of Fire* produced in collaboration with Cartier and devised with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Cartier in-house perfumer Mathilde Laurent; and memorable performances with an array of world-class guest artists.

In 2023, Salonen led the San Francisco Symphony in a European tour featuring extended residencies at the Philharmonie de Paris in France and Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, including the Orchestra's first international SoundBox concerts. Alongside Gustavo Dudamel and Rafael Payare, Salonen spearheaded the California Festival: A Celebration of New Music. This two-week statewide initiative brought together more than 100 musical organizations to perform more than 180 works written in the last five years. In March 2024, Salonen led the San Francisco Symphony on a tour of Southern California, including performances in Costa Mesa, Palm Desert, and Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Esa-Pekka Salonen's 2024–25 season has included world premieres of works by Nico Muhly, Xavier Muzik, and Gabriella Smith; the first San Francisco Symphony performances of his own Cello Concerto and Magnus Lindberg's *Chorale*; a continued exploration with the Orchestra of the works of Igor Stravinsky; and interpretations of some of the most significant works in the symphonic repertoire from Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy, Mahler, Sibelius, and Strauss, among others.

Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony have released several live concert recordings together, including Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater* on Deutsche Grammophon and Béla Bartók's complete piano concertos performed by Pierre-Laurent Aimard on the PENTATONE label. In March 2023, the San Francisco Symphony announced its partnership with Apple Music Classical with the release of new spatial audio recordings of György Ligeti's *Clocks and Clouds*, *Lux Aeterna*, and *Ramifications*. Additional SFS Media releases on Apple Music Classical have included Anders Hillborg's *Kongsgaard Variations*, Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*, Sergei Prokofiev's music from *Romeo and Juliet*, Elizabeth Ogonek's *Sleep & Unremembrance*, Ottorino Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, and Jean Sibelius's Symphony No. 5. Salonen and the Symphony's recordings of Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*, and Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* all received Grammy® Award nominations; *Adriana Mater* received the 2025 Grammy Award for Best Opera Performance. See a [full list](#) of Salonen and the Orchestra's recordings.

Read a [chronological list](#) of highlights from Esa-Pekka Salonen's tenure as SF Symphony Music Director.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Tickets:

Tickets for concerts at Davies Symphony Hall can be purchased via sfsymphony.org or by calling the San Francisco Symphony Box Office at 415.864.6000.

Location:

Davies Symphony Hall is located at 201 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Salonen Conducts *The Firebird*

Friday, May 23, 2025, at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 24, 2025, at 7:30pm

Sunday, May 25, 2025, at 2:00pm

Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor

Isabelle Faust violin

San Francisco Symphony

MAGNUS LINDBERG *Chorale* [First San Francisco Symphony Performances]

ALBAN BERG Violin Concerto

IGOR STRAVINSKY *The Firebird*

Tickets (\$30–179): sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/salonen-the-firebird

Broadcast / Archived Stream: A broadcast of these performances will air Sunday, June 15, at 7:00pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and kdfc.com where it will be available for on-demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Esa-Pekka Salonen & Hilary Hahn

Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 2:00pm

Friday, May 30, 2025, at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 31, 2025, at 7:30pm [UC Davis Mondavi Center]

Sunday, June 1, 2025, at 2:00pm

Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor

Hilary Hahn violin

San Francisco Symphony

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Violin Concerto

Tickets (\$49–250): sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/salonen-hahn

Preconcert talk: Thursday, May 29 from 1:00pm–1:30pm: A preconcert talk by Laura Prichard will be presented from the stage. Free to all ticketholders.

Broadcast / Archived Stream: A broadcast of these performances will air Sunday, June 29, at 7:00pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and kdfc.com where it will be available for on-demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Salonen Conducts Sibelius 7

Friday, June 6, 2025, at 7:30pm

Saturday, June 7, 2025, at 7:30pm

Sunday, June 8, 2025, at 2:00pm

Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor

San Francisco Symphony

RICHARD STRAUSS *Don Juan*

JEAN SIBELIUS Symphony No. 7

GABRIELLA SMITH *Rewilding* [San Francisco Symphony Commission and World Premiere]

RICHARD STRAUSS *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*

Tickets (\$30–179): sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/salonen-sibelius7

Broadcast / Archived Stream: A broadcast of these performances will air Sunday, July 6, at 7:00pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and [kdfc.com](https://www.kdfc.com) where it will be available for on-demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

Lobby Exhibit: Composing the World explores the creative processes of Gabriella Smith and Xavier Muzik—two composers who transform their surroundings into music in strikingly different but equally profound ways.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Salonen Conducts Mahler 2

Thursday, June 12, 2025, at 10:00am [Open Rehearsal]

Thursday, June 12, 2025, at 7:30pm

Friday, June 13, 2025, at 7:30pm

Saturday, June 14, 2025, at 7:30pm

Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor

Heidi Stober soprano

Sasha Cooke mezzo-soprano

San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Jenny Wong director

San Francisco Symphony

GUSTAV MAHLER Symphony No. 2

Tickets (\$145–399): sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/salonen-mahler2

Open Rehearsal Tickets (\$55): sfsymphony.org/Buy-Tickets/2024-25/salonen-mahler2-OR

Prerehearsal talk: Thursday, June 12 from 9:00am–9:30am: A prerehearsal talk by Laura Prichard will be presented from the stage. Free to all ticketholders.

Broadcast / Archived Stream: A broadcast of these performances will air Sunday, July 13, at 7:00pm on Classical KDFC 90.3 San Francisco, 104.9 San Jose, 89.9 Napa, and [kdfc.com](https://www.kdfc.com) where it will be available for on-demand streaming for 21 days following the broadcast.

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The May 23–25 and May 29–June 1 concerts, part of The Barbro and Bernard Osher Masterworks Series, are made possible by a generous gift from Barbro and Bernard Osher.

Thursday matinee concerts are endowed by a gift in memory of Rhoda Goldman.

The June 6 concert is presented in partnership with the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Lead support for the June 6–8 performances of Gabriella Smith's Rewilding is provided by the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Works of Music.

Lead support for the San Francisco Symphony Chorus this season is provided through a visionary gift from an anonymous donor.

Sasha Cooke and Heidi Stober's performances are generously sponsored by Anderson Norby.

Open rehearsals are endowed by a bequest from The Estate of Katharine Hanrahan.

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