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**FULL PROGRAM ANNOUNCED:
SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY CELEBRATES MICHAEL TILSON
THOMAS'S LIFE AND LEGACY WITH A CONCERT FOR MTT,
OCTOBER 2**

Jamie Bernstein and pianists Jeremy Denk and John Wilson join the previously announced lineup of guest artists to celebrate and honor Michael Tilson Thomas, including mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, vocalist Audra McDonald, pianists Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Yuja Wang, and conductors Teddy Abrams and Edwin Outwater, alongside the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus with Director Jenny Wong

Program includes world premiere performances of works by Michael Tilson Thomas and Mason Bates

Additional tickets just released and available at sfsymphony.org



SAN FRANCISCO, CA—On Friday, October 2, the San Francisco Symphony honors the life, artistry, and enduring legacy of Michael Tilson Thomas with a special memorial concert celebrating one of the most transformative figures in the Orchestra’s history and a beloved cultural figure in San Francisco and throughout the classical music world. **A Concert for MTT** will feature many of Tilson Thomas’s longtime friends and collaborators, including conductors Teddy Abrams and Edwin Outwater, mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, vocalist Audra McDonald, pianists Jeremy Denk, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Yuja Wang, and John Wilson, and guest speaker Jamie Bernstein, alongside the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Symphony Chorus with Director Jenny Wong.

The evening will reflect the breadth of Tilson Thomas’s musical imagination, his passion for artistic discovery, and the lasting and profound relationships he cultivated throughout his career. Through a mix of personal tributes and anecdotes, archival footage and recordings, and performances of iconic repertoire, all drawn from a lifetime of music-making, the concert will trace Michael Tilson Thomas’s remarkable journey and illuminate the indelible mark left by his 25-year tenure leading the San Francisco Symphony. Under his leadership, he helped the Orchestra achieve artistic acclaim, expand its global reach, and champion contemporary and American music, while reimagining how orchestras can connect with audiences and communities.

From mid-September through mid-October, the San Francisco Symphony will also highlight Michael Tilson Thomas’s transformative tenure in an exhibit in the Davies Symphony Hall First Tier lobby. The exhibit will feature photos from throughout Tilson Thomas’s long career with the Orchestra, as well as personal items from MTT’s collection, including scores, batons, awards, and other memorabilia.

A Concert for MTT program

The program includes orchestral, choral, and vocal works from American composers that Tilson Thomas championed and admired throughout his career, including John Adams, Mason Bates, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, and Meredith Monk. MTT was a tireless advocate of American music throughout his lifetime, programming, performing, and commissioning works by countless composers and curating festivals devoted to American music in 1996, 2000, and 2012.

The program will also feature world premiere performances of two works, including Tilson Thomas's own *Constancy* for solo piano, performed by **John Wilson**, and **Mason Bates's** "If you listen, there's a song," performed by **Sasha Cooke** and **Jeremy Denk**. Inspired by a poem written by MTT's father, Bates's work was composed in tribute to MTT for this occasion.

Throughout the evening, many of Tilson Thomas's close friends and collaborators will take the stage in tribute. Conductors **Teddy Abrams** and **Edwin Outwater** will share the podium throughout the evening. **Yuja Wang** joins the Orchestra and Abrams to perform the Canzone: moderato movement from Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto. Later in the program, Wang and Abrams perform the second and third movements from Poulenc's Sonata for Four Hands, which Wang performed with Tilson Thomas during their first San Francisco Symphony collaboration in 2010 and again on tour with the Orchestra in 2012. **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** joins Outwater and the Orchestra for the slow movement from Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, which Thibaudet performed with MTT and the Orchestra in 2006 and 2013.

Audra McDonald takes the stage for two songs: a medley of Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere" from *West Side Story* and "Some Other Time" from *On the Town*, and George Gershwin's "He Loves and She Loves" from *Funny Face*. **Jamie Bernstein**, Leonard Bernstein's eldest daughter and a friend of Tilson Thomas's, will introduce the first movement of Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, which closes out the first half of the program, speaking about her family's close relationships with MTT.

Mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke** joins Outwater and the Orchestra for Tilson Thomas's "*Ich lebe mein Leben*" from *Meditations on Rilke*. Cooke premiered the complete song cycle with MTT and the San Francisco Symphony in 2020, and their live-concert recording of the work, released on SFS Media, won the Grammy Award for Best Classical Compendium in 2021. Pianist **Jeremy Denk** later joins Cooke for the world premiere of Mason Bates's "If you listen, there's a song," based on a poem by MTT's father.

Outwater and the San Francisco Symphony will also perform the Andante moderato movement from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 6. Throughout their partnership, MTT and the San Francisco Symphony's Mahler performances and recordings were critically acclaimed, garnering seven Grammy Awards for the Mahler Project series on SFS Media between 2002 and 2010.

The program also highlights the **San Francisco Symphony Chorus**, which performs the first movement of Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Copland's "The Promise of Living" from *The Tender Land* with the San Francisco Symphony, as well as Meredith Monk's Panda Chant II from *The Games*, sung a cappella with Chorus Director **Jenny Wong**.

Due to high demand, a limited number of Side Terrace seats for A Concert for MTT have recently been made available for purchase. Additional returned tickets may become available; check sfsymphony.org for current information.

Michael Tilson Thomas (December 21, 1944–April 22, 2026) made his debut with the San Francisco Symphony in 1974 at age 29 and led nearly 1,800 concerts over the course of his 52-year relationship with the Symphony. During his incredible 25-year tenure as Music Director (1995–2020), MTT oversaw the launch of SFS Media, the Symphony’s own recording label, which released many Grammy Award-winning recordings; introduced *Keeping Score*, creating a lasting and memorable music education resource for countless people; and created unforgettable concert experiences for the Symphony’s audiences and community.

[Read more](#) about Michael Tilson Thomas’s impact on the San Francisco Symphony.

About Michael Tilson Thomas

Michael Tilson Thomas was Music Director Laureate of the San Francisco Symphony, Conductor Laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra, cofounder and Artistic Director Laureate of the New World Symphony, and Distinguished Professor of Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He was a 12-time Grammy Award winner and conducted the major orchestras of Europe and the United States.

Born in Los Angeles, he studied conducting and composition with Ingolf Dahl at the University of Southern California and, as a young musician, worked with artists including Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland. In his mid-20s, he became Assistant Conductor—and later Principal Guest Conductor—of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He subsequently served as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

In 1987, Tilson Thomas cofounded the New World Symphony (NWS), a postgraduate orchestral academy in Miami Beach where the future of orchestral music is envisioned, cultivated, and shared. Through fellowships lasting up to three years, NWS prepares emerging orchestra musicians to become artistic leaders in performing, educational and community-based organizations worldwide. NWS has helped launch the careers of over 1,300 alumni.

He became Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony in 1995, ushering in a period of significant growth and heightened international recognition for the orchestra, championing contemporary and American composers alongside classical masters.

His discography includes more than 120 recordings, and his television work includes series for the BBC and PBS, the New York Philharmonic’s Young People’s Concerts, and numerous televised performances. His profile *Michael Tilson Thomas: Where Now Is* aired on PBS’s *American Masters* series in fall 2020.

Throughout his career, he was an active composer, with major works including *From the Diary of Anne Frank*, premiered with narrator Audrey Hepburn, *Agnegram*, and *Meditations on Rilke*. Both appear on SFS Media's Grammy Award-winning recording of his music. In 2023, Yuja Wang and Teddy Abrams released a recording on DG that included Tilson Thomas's *You Come Here Often?*, which won a Grammy Award in 2024 for Best Classical Instrumental Solo.

He was an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France, member of the American Academies of Arts & Sciences and Arts & Letters, National Medal of Arts recipient, and a 2019 Kennedy Center Honoree.

Three major recording projects were released in 2024 in celebration of his 80th birthday: *GRACE: The Music of Michael Tilson Thomas*, a four-disc box set of Tilson Thomas's compositions on Pentatone; *The Complete Columbia, CBS and RCA Recordings* on Sony Classical; and *The Complete Deutsche Grammophon & Argo Recordings* on DG Eloquence.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Tickets:

Due to high demand, a limited number of Side Terrace seats for A Concert for MTT have recently been made available for purchase. Additional returned tickets may become available; check sfsymphony.org for current information.

Location:

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

SPECIAL EVENT

A Concert for MTT

Friday, October 2, 2026, at 7:30pm

Edwin Outwater conductor

Teddy Abrams conductor and piano

Yuja Wang piano

Jeremy Denk piano

Jean-Yves Thibaudet piano

John Wilson piano

Audra McDonald vocalist

Sasha Cooke mezzo-soprano

Jamie Bernstein speaker

Adam Larsen video design

San Francisco Symphony

San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Jenny Wong director

JOHN ADAMS *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*

SAMUEL BARBER Canzone: moderato from Piano Concerto, Opus 38

CHARLES IVES Thanksgiving and Forefathers' Day from *New England Holidays* Symphony

MAURICE RAVEL Adagio assai from Piano Concerto in G

LEONARD BERNSTEIN "Somewhere/Some Other Time" Medley

GEORGE GERSHWIN "He Loves and She Loves" from *Funny Face*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN First movement from *Chichester Psalms*

MEREDITH MONK Panda Chant II from *The Games*

JOHN CAGE (orch. Harrison) Movements III, IV & V from Suite for Toy Piano

GUSTAV MAHLER Andante moderato from Symphony No. 6 in A minor

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS *Constancy* (World Premiere)

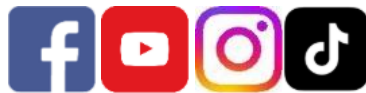
FRANCIS POULENC Rustique and Final from Sonata for Four Hands

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS "Ich lebe mein Leben" from *Meditations on Rilke*

MASON BATES "If you listen, there's a song" (World Premiere)

AARON COPLAND "The Promise of Living" from *The Tender Land*

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