



Esa-Pekka Salonen & San Francisco Symphony Chronology

2003–04

April 1–3, 2004: Esa-Pekka Salonen makes his first guest appearance with the San Francisco Symphony, conducting Bartók's Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, his own *Insomnia*, Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Yefim Bronfman as soloist, and Mussorgsky's *A Night on Bald Mountain*. Additional guest appearances follow in 2011 and 2015.



2018–19

December 5, 2018: The San Francisco Symphony announces Esa-Pekka Salonen as the Orchestra's 12th Music Director and names eight Collaborative Partners: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding.

January 18–20, 2019: Salonen conducts the SF Symphony in his first concerts as Music Director Designate, leading the Orchestra in Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Metacosmos*, Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and Jean Sibelius's *Four Legends from the Kalevala*. [Watch a clip of Salonen and the Orchestra's performance of Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.](#)



2019–20

February 20–22 and February 27–29, 2020: As Music Director Designate, Salonen conducts the SF Symphony in two programs. February 20–22, Julia Bullock joins Salonen and the Orchestra for works based on poems by notable French Symbolists—Britten’s *Les Illuminations* and Ravel’s Three Poems of Stéphane Mallarmé. The program also features music from Ravel’s *Mother Goose (Ma Mère l’Oye)* and Steven Stucky’s *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary* (after Purcell). On February 27–29, Salonen leads the Orchestra in his own Violin Concerto featuring Leila Josefowicz on a program with Carl Nielsen’s Symphony No. 5 and Ludwig van Beethoven’s 1811 Overture to *King Stephen*.

March 6, 2020: San Francisco Mayor London N. Breed announces that War Memorial Performing Arts Center venues, including Davies Symphony Hall, will be closed for all public events for the next two weeks, beginning March 7, in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The shutdown extends until May 2021, when the San Francisco Symphony resumes live performances with strict COVID-19 protocols in place.



2020–21

August 13, 2020: The San Francisco Symphony and the San Francisco Conservatory (SFCM) partner to announce The Emerging Black Composers Project, a new initiative to commission ten new works over the next ten years. Developed in partnership with SFCM’s President’s Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion, with artistic guidance from Oakland Symphony Music Director Michael Morgan, SFCM Music Director Edwin Outwater, and SF Symphony Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen, the initiative is created to foster the creation, workshop, and performance of new music from early-career Black American composers.

November 14, 2020: The 2020–21 season, Esa-Pekka Salonen’s first as Music Director, opens with digital program *Throughline*, featuring Salonen, members of the San Francisco Symphony, and all eight Collaborative Partners. [Watch *Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home*.](#)

February 4, 2021: The Symphony launches SFSymphony+, a new on-demand video streaming service featuring exclusive original digital content. Programming includes all-new SoundBox programs—curated by Salonen, the Collaborative Partners, and guest artists—and CURRENTS episodes, chamber music performed by SF Symphony musicians, as well as other special projects to be released on a rolling basis.

May 6, 2021: The San Francisco Symphony returns to live concerts at Davies Symphony Hall, with performances each Thursday and Friday throughout May and June 2021. All tickets for Salonen and the Symphony’s May 6 and 7 performances, and a portion of tickets for the remaining performances, are reserved for Bay Area hospital and medical professionals, and representatives from community centers and cultural districts who were at the front lines supporting the people of San Francisco in critical ways throughout the pandemic.

June 16, 2021: The San Francisco Symphony and SFCM announce Trevor Weston as the winner of the first annual Emerging Black Composers Project, which launched in August 2020. As part of the prize, the San Francisco Symphony, led by Salonen, will give the world premiere of Weston’s new commissioned work in the fall of 2022. The selection committee also names three additional prizewinners: Jonathan Bingham, Shawn Okpebholo, and Sumi Tonooka.

July 2021: The San Francisco Symphony’s 2021 summer season begins, with live concerts at Sigmund Stern Grove, Davies Symphony Hall, and Stanford University’s Frost Amphitheater.



2021–22

September 21, 2021: Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony release a digital audio-visual recording of Robert Schumann’s Symphony No. 3, *Rhenish*.

October 1, 2021: The San Francisco Symphony and Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen kick off their second season together with the celebratory Re-Opening Night Concert on Friday, October 1, marking their first opening night concert together since Salonen assumed the post of Music Director **the previous** season. The program includes John Adams’ *Slonimsky’s Earbox*; Alberto Ginastera’s *Estancia* Suite, with dancers from the San Francisco-based contemporary ballet

company Alonzo King LINES Ballet performing original choreography by Alonzo King; Silvestre Revueltas' *Noche de encantamiento* from his film score to *La noche de los Mayas*, and features Collaborative Partner and singer/bassist esperanza spalding and a jazz trio of guest musicians performing Wayne Shorter's *Gaia* with the San Francisco Symphony. This performance later airs on *Great Performances* on PBS.

October 14–17, 2021: Salonen and the Orchestra perform their first concert with Collaborative Partner Claire Chase, who performs Kaija Saariaho's concerto for flute and orchestra, *Aile du songe* (Wing of the Dream).

October 21–23, 2021: Salonen and Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto give the United States premiere of Collaborative Partner Bryce Dessner's new Violin Concerto with the SF Symphony, an SF Symphony co-commission.

January 18, 2022: Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony release *LIGETI: PARADIGMS*. Led by Salonen and featuring members of the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, *LIGETI: PARADIGMS* is a 35-minute audio and visual exploration of three works by innovative composer György Ligeti, all recorded in early COVID-restricted environments. In partnership with renowned media artist Refik Anadol and SF Symphony Collaborative Partner and Artificial Intelligence entrepreneur Carol Reiley, this unique presentation pairs SF Symphony and Chorus performances of Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*, *Ramifications*, and *Clocks and Clouds* with imagery generated by open-source AI algorithms to create visual interpretations of Ligeti's works. The *a cappella* choral work *Lux Aeterna* also features a unique spatial audio Dolby Atmos binaural mix that allows viewers to experience a surround-sound experience via standard stereo headphones. [Watch LIGETI: PARADIGMS.](#)

March 3–5, 2022: Salonen conducts the world premiere of *Song of the Flaming Phoenix* (火凤凰的笙音), a new concerto for sheng by Fang Man and featuring sheng virtuoso Wu Wei, commissioned by the League of American Orchestras with the generous support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.

March 30, 2022: Salonen and the SF Symphony announce the 2022–23 season, and launch a multi-year partnership with director Peter Sellars, beginning with June 2022 performances of Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*.

May 17, 2022: Collaborative Partner Julia Bullock brings her original mixed media program *History's Persistent Voice* to Davies Symphony Hall for a performance with members of the San Francisco Symphony that highlights the words, work, and experiences of Black American artists.

June 1, 2022: Director Netia Jones teams up with Esa-Pekka Salonen, actor Bruce Davison, dancer Adji Cissoko, and musicians of the San Francisco Symphony to present a new digital film of Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, the second of Salonen's two signature digital projects of the 2021–22 season. [Watch Stravinsky: The Soldier's Tale.](#)

June 10–12, 2022: Peter Sellars joins Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus for their first collaboration together: a double-bill performance of Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex* and *Symphony of Psalms*.

June 28, 2022: The San Francisco Symphony and SFCM announce Jens Ibsen as the winner of the second annual Emerging Black Composers Project (EBCP) prize. The San Francisco Symphony, led by Salonen, give the world premiere of his work during the 2023–24 season.



2022–23

September 22–23, 2022: Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony kick off their 2022–23 season with performances of Felix Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* featuring San Francisco-based African-American Shakespeare Company, Emmy-nominated actor Chris Sullivan (as Bottom), sopranos Anne-Marie MacIntosh and Elisa Sunshine, members of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, and several local political and cultural luminaries.

September 29–October 2, 2022: Salonen and the Symphony perform the world premiere of Trevor Weston’s *Push*. Weston was the first winner of the Emerging Black Composers Project, a ten-year commissioning project in collaboration with SFCM to foster the creation, workshop, and performance of new music from early-career Black American composers.

October 13–15, 2022: Salonen and the Symphony are joined by Yuja Wang for the world premiere of Magnus Lindberg’s Piano Concerto No. 3, an SF Symphony commission.

January 31, 2023: The San Francisco Symphony, LA Philharmonic, and San Diego Symphony announce the California Festival: A Celebration of New Music, a two-week, statewide festival of music from around the world aimed at showcasing today’s most compelling and forward-looking voices in performances of works written within the past five years.

February 10–11, 2023: Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto curates SoundBox: Convergence with composer/developer Jesper Nordin.

February 23, 25 & 26, 2023: Pianist Conor Hanick joins Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony as soloist in the world premiere performances of *No Such Spring*, a new work for piano and orchestra by composer Samuel Adams, commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony.

February 24, 2023: Collaborative Partner Claire Chase performs Marcos Balter’s *Pan* in the San Francisco Symphony’s SoundBox space in partnership with Amateur Music Network, Openhouse, and other art, education, and community organizations.

March 4, 2023: Collaborative Partner Nico Muhly curates SoundBox: Patterns, featuring Yuja Wang.

March 9–17, 2023: Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony embark on their first tour together—and the Symphony’s first international tour since 2016—with performances at the Philharmonie de Paris in France, Philharmonie Luxembourg, and Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, Germany. In addition to full Orchestra performances with Salonen, the San Francisco Symphony, and guest artists Yuja Wang and Johan Dalene, the Symphony is joined on tour by two Collaborative Partners: Claire Chase, who performs Marcos Balter’s *Pan* in Paris on March 12; and Nico Muhly, who joins Salonen, pianist Yuja Wang, and members of the Orchestra for two performances of his SoundBox program, *Codes*, in Paris and Hamburg on March 9 and 17.

March 28, 2023: Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony announce the 2023–24 season, and launch a new partnership with Apple Music Classical, releasing spatial audio recordings exclusively through the new app. The first three recordings include audio-only recordings of Ligeti’s *Clocks and Clouds*, *Lux Aeterna*, and *Ramifications*. Later, the Symphony will release several additional Apple Music Classical-exclusive recordings on SFS Media, including Anders Hillborg’s *Kongsgaard Variations*, Elizabeth Ogonek’s *Sleep & Unremembrance*, Ottorino Respighi’s *Pines of Rome*, Jean Sibelius’s Symphony No. 5, and Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

April 14–15, 2023: Collaborative Partner Nicholas Britnell curates a Soundbox program, featuring performances of Britnell’s music and a conversation between Britnell and his close collaborator, director Barry Jenkins.

June 1, 2023: The San Francisco Symphony and SFCM announce Xavier Muzik as the winner of the third annual Emerging Black Composers Project (EBCP) prize. The San Francisco Symphony, led by Salonen, will give the world premiere of his work during the 2024–25 season.

June 8–11, 2023: Esa-Pekka Salonen, Peter Sellars, and the San Francisco Symphony perform a staged production of Kaija Saariaho’s opera *Adriana Mater*. The performances were dedicated to Saariaho, who sadly passed away earlier in the week.

June 15–27, 2023: Igor Levit joins Salonen and the Orchestra as Artist-in-Residence for the 2022–23 season. Performances include Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5 and Ferruccio Busoni’s Piano Concerto across two Orchestral Series programs with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, in addition to a Great Performers Series solo recital and a chamber music performance with members of the Orchestra.

June 29–July 1, 2023: Collaborative Partner Julia Bullock joins Salonen and the Orchestra for the final program of the 2022–23 season, performing works by Margaret Bonds and George Gershwin.



2023–24

September 15, 2023: Pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Salonen, and the San Francisco Symphony release *Bartók Piano Concertos* on PENTATONE, available for physical and digital release. The new album features live concert recordings of Béla Bartók's complete piano concertos, performed with Aimard at Davies Symphony Hall in June 2022 and February 2023.

September 18, 2023: Salonen and the Symphony announce Jenny Wong as the San Francisco Symphony Chorus's next Director.

September 22, 2023: Salonen and the Orchestra open the 2023–24 season with the Opening Night Gala, a program interweaving music and technology, all highlighted with cutting-edge lighting and video projections created by 59 Productions. The program includes Richard Strauss's *Don Juan*; Gustav Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, featuring baritone Simon Keenlyside; Anders Hillborg's *Rap Notes*, featuring rappers Kev Choice and Anthony Veneziale, along with soprano Hila Plitmann; and Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*.

October 6–7, 2023: Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto joins Salonen and the Orchestra for the world premiere of Jesper Nordin's *Convergence*.

October 12–14, 2023: Salonen, Emanuel Ax, and the Symphony give the world premiere of Anders Hillborg's Piano Concerto No. 2, *The MAX Concerto*, a San Francisco Symphony commission which the composer wrote expressly for Ax.

November 10, 2023: Salonen, the San Francisco Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus's recordings on the Orchestra's in-house SFS Media label are nominated for two 2024 Grammy® Awards. The live concert recording of Igor Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring* conducted by Salonen and featuring the San Francisco Symphony is nominated in the category of Best Orchestral Performance. György Ligeti: *Lux Aeterna*, featuring the San Francisco Symphony Chorus with former Chorus Director Ragnar Bohlin, is nominated in the category of Best Choral Performance.

November 3–19, 2023: The California Festival: A Celebration of New Music begins on November 3. Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts the SF Symphony in two California Festival programs, November 10–12 and November 17–18, featuring works by composers with California ties: Emerging Black Composers Project winner Jens Ibsen's *Drowned in Light* (world premiere), Gabriella Smith's *Breathing Forests*, Salonen's own *kínēma* with Principal Clarinet Carey Bell, and three works by Igor Stravinsky.

March 1–3, 2024: The San Francisco Symphony and Cartier present a multisensory performance of Alexander Scriabin’s *Prometheus, The Poem of Fire* in Davies Symphony Hall. Devised by Esa-Pekka Salonen, pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and Cartier in-house perfumer Mathilde Laurent, this collaboration marks the world premiere of an immersive presentation of *Prometheus* that combines a dynamic musical and light performance with olfactory curation.

March 20–22, 2024: Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony, along with violinist Lisa Batiashvili, embark on a three-concert Southern California tour with performances at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa , Palm Desert’s McCallum Theatre at the College of the Desert , and Los Angeles’ Walt Disney Concert Hall. Programming includes Jean Sibelius’s *Finlandia*, Violin Concerto with Batiashvili as soloist, and Symphony No. 1, along with John Adams’s *Naïve and Sentimental Music*.

April 5–6, 2024: Collaborative Partner Carol Reiley curates SoundBox: Press Play—Carol Reiley and the Robots, a program that explores what the future of technology and music could be.

May 21, 2024: Esa-Pekka Salonen receives the Polar Prize. In a citation, Salonen is commended as “a master of tone in soul and heart. With his resolute baton, he not only guides symphony orchestras but points the way for all classical music.”

June 7–9, 2024: Director Peter Sellars and choreographer Alonzo King join Salonen and the Orchestra for a program featuring Maurice Ravel’s *Ma mère l’Oye* (*Mother Goose*) with Alonzo King LINES Ballet, and Arnold Schoenberg’s haunting one-act monodrama, *Erwartung*, directed by Sellars and featuring soprano Mary Elizabeth Williams in her Orchestral Series debut.

June 20, 2024: Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony announce the release of three new digital-only spatial audio recordings from SFS Media, all available exclusively via the Apple Music Classical app: Igor Stravinsky’s *The Firebird* (June 21), Sergei Prokofiev’s Music from *Romeo and Juliet* (August 2), and Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (September 23).



2024–25

September 14, 2024: Cynthia Erivo joins Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony for a special one-night performance.

September 25, 2024: Salonen and the Orchestra are joined by pianists Lang Lang and Gina Alice for the Symphony's Opening Gala. The program includes selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No. 2 and *The Carnival of the Animals*.

September 27–28, 2024: Salonen conducts the world premiere of Nico Muhly's new Baroque-inspired Piano Concerto, an SF Symphony commission, featuring pianist Alexandre Tharaud in his Orchestral Series debut.

October 18–20, 2024: Principal Cellist Rainer Eudeikis makes his SF Symphony solo debut performing Esa-Pekka Salonen's Cello Concerto with Salonen and the Orchestra.

February 2, 2025: In November 2024, Salonen and the Symphony's recordings of *Igor Stravinsky: The Firebird* and *Kaija Saariaho: Adriana Mater* were nominated for three 2025 Grammy® Awards. Salonen and the SF Symphony's live concert recording of *The Firebird*, released on the Orchestra's in-house label SFS Media, was nominated in the category of Best Orchestral Performance. The Deutsche Grammophon-released live-concert recording of *Adriana Mater*, conducted by Salonen, directed by Peter Sellars, and featuring the SF Symphony, SF Symphony Chorus, and a cast of vocal soloists, was nominated for Best Opera Recording and Best Contemporary Classical Composition. On February 2, *Adriana Mater* won the Grammy Award for Best Opera Performance.

February 21–23, 2025: Salonen and the SF Symphony perform the world premiere of Xavier Muzik's *Strange Beasts*. Muzik is the 2023 winner of the Emerging Black Composers Project.

May 23–June 14, 2025: Salonen returns to the SF Symphony podium for his final four weeks of programs as the Symphony's Music Director. He'll lead the world premiere of Gabriella Smith's *Rewilding*, an SF Symphony commission, as well as works by Ludwig van Beethoven, Alban Berg, Magnus Lindberg, Jean Sibelius, Richard Strauss, and Igor Stravinsky, closing out his tenure June 12–14 with Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2.