



San Francisco Symphony

A Symphony Rises from the Ashes

In the wake of the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire, San Francisco's civic leaders set about creating a permanent orchestra in the music-loving city. In December 1911, the San Francisco Symphony gave its first concerts, rekindling the city's cultural life. It delighted audiences with a kaleidoscopic mix of classics and new music.

A Growing Reputation

The Orchestra grew in stature and acclaim under a succession of distinguished music directors: Henry Hadley, Alfred Hertz, Basil Cameron, Issay Dobrowen, the legendary Pierre Monteux, Enrique Jordá, Josef Krips, Seiji Ozawa, Edo de Waart, Herbert Blomstedt (who continues to serve as Conductor Laureate), and Michael Tilson Thomas, who became the Symphony's first Music Director Laureate following his remarkable 25-year tenure. In the 2020–21 season, the San Francisco Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its twelfth Music Director, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape. In their inaugural season together, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of cultural disciplines: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers, along with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony, have set out to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners' unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas. Shaped by the dynamic partnership and shared vision of Esa-Pekka Salonen, the San Francisco Symphony's eight Collaborative Partners, and the Orchestra and Chorus, the 2023–24 season reflects a spirit of collaboration, experimentation, and renewed dialogue through live music.

Awards & Recordings Aplenty

The San Francisco Symphony has won some of the world's most prestigious recording awards, including Japan's Record Academy Award, France's Grand Prix du Disque, Britain's *Gramophone* Award, and a bundle of Grammy® awards. With Michael Tilson Thomas, the Symphony has won thirteen Grammy®, including a 1996 award for their debut live RCA Red Seal recording of Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, three for the 1999 recording of ballet scores by Igor Stravinsky, seven for the acclaimed Gustav Mahler symphony cycle recorded over a decade, a

2013 Grammy® for John Adams' *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and most recently a 2021 Grammy® Award in the category of Best Classical Compendium for the recording of Michael Tilson Thomas' compositions *From the Diary of Anne Frank* & *Meditations on Rilke*. The recordings of Mahler, Adams, and Tilson Thomas were released on the Symphony's own label, SFS Media, which launched in 2001.

Conductors & Composers

Some of the most important conductors have been guests on the San Francisco Symphony podium, among them Bruno Walter, Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, and Sir Georg Solti. The composers who have led the orchestra comprise a who's who list of modern and contemporary music: Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Maurice Ravel, Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, Aaron Copland, and John Adams. For its adventurous programming, the Symphony has been honored nineteen times by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. And in 1979, the appointment of John Adams as New Music Adviser became a model for composer-in-residence programs adopted by major orchestras across America.

A Leader in Education

The San Francisco Symphony provides some of the most extensive education and community programs offered by any American orchestra. The Symphony's free music education experiences engage students in grades 1–12 throughout the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). The Fisher Family Adventures in Music (AIM) program, one of the longest-running education programs of its kind in the country since its launch in 1988, serves every child in grades 1–5 in San Francisco's public schools and engages more than 21,000 students annually. The Music and Mentors program supports SFUSD's band and orchestra programs in grades 6–12 with professional musicians who coach students weekly, and provides instrument supplies and concert tickets. The Symphony's online educational resources include Music Connects and a variety of digital programs that offer lessons and activities designed to support schools' remote learning goals as well as promote music education at home.

The acclaimed San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO), now under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Daniel Stewart, gives pre-professional training to the Bay Area's most gifted young musicians at no cost. Over the past 41 years, the SFSYO has toured the world and made impressive recordings, earning a reputation as one of the finest youth ensembles in the world. Members of the SFSYO benefit from weekly coachings by San Francisco Symphony musicians.

The Soul of the City

In October 1989, in a gesture harkening back to the Symphony's beginnings, Herbert Blomstedt and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and Chorus helped San Francisco begin to heal five days after the destructive Loma Prieta earthquake, playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to an audience of more than 20,000 in Golden Gate Park. In September 2011, to celebrate its 100th

anniversary, the Symphony, led by Michael Tilson Thomas and joined by pianist Lang Lang, played a free, sun-drenched concert in the city's Civic Center Plaza that drew 10,000 people. In November 2017, in response to the devastating Northern California wildfires, Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony presented a benefit concert in Davies Symphony Hall, with proceeds benefitting North Bay fire relief funds. On May 6 & 7, 2021, Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen conducted the Orchestra's first live performances in more than a year for an invited audience including Bay Area hospital and medical professionals and representatives from community centers and cultural districts that supported the people of San Francisco in critical ways throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Music for Everyone

In 2006, Michael Tilson Thomas and the SF Symphony launched *Keeping Score*, a multi-year, multimedia program designed to make classical music accessible to people of all ages and musical backgrounds. It included a national PBS television series seen by more than six million Americans, an interactive website, a national radio series hosted by Tilson Thomas, documentary and live performance DVDs, and a classroom program for K-12 schools that integrated classical music into core subjects. *Keeping Score* is available on DVD and Blu-ray, can be accessed online at keepingscore.org, and was made available for unlimited free streaming on the Symphony's YouTube channel in March 2020. In November 2020, the San Francisco Symphony, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and the eight Collaborative Partners launched their first season together with *Throughline: San Francisco Symphony—From Hall to Home*, a one-hour digital concert program anchored by the world premiere of Collaborative Partner Nico Muhly's new work *Throughline*, recorded remotely from locations around the world. The program was broadcast locally on television and simultaneously streamed online worldwide. In recent seasons the Symphony expanded its slate of original video content and experiences, producing all-new digital SoundBox programs, CURRENTS episodes, chamber music performances, and other signature digital projects, such as Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* and *LIGETI: PARADIGMS*. The Symphony's use of new technology to reach audiences dates back to 1926, when it became the first orchestra in the United States to play on regular radio broadcasts. Today, the San Francisco Symphony is heard on nearly 300 radio stations across the country, enriching American musical life.