



San Francisco Symphony History

In the wake of the 1906 earthquake, establishment of a permanent orchestra was high on San Francisco's civic agenda, and in December 1911 the San Francisco Symphony gave its first concerts. Almost immediately, the Symphony revitalized the city's cultural life with programs that offered a kaleidoscope of classics and new music.

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 recently became the Symphony's first Music Director Laureate following his remarkable 25-year tenure. In the 2020–21 season, the San Francisco Symphony welcomes conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its twelfth Music Director and embarks 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 introduce 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 joins with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony to embark on a future of experimentation by collaborating on new ideas, breaking conventional rules, and creating unique and powerful experiences.

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 the United States' Grammy. The Orchestra's recordings for RCA Red Seal include a collection of Stravinsky ballets (which captured three Grammys, including those for Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance) and discs devoted to Prokofiev, Copland, Gershwin, and Charles Ives, all led by Michael Tilson Thomas. Their recording of Mahler's Sixth Symphony on SFS Media inaugurated a Mahler symphonic cycle and won the Grammy award for Best Orchestral Recording of 2002; their recording of Mahler's Third Symphony won the 2003 Grammy for Best Classical Album; their recording of the Mahler Seventh captured Grammys for Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance of 2006; and their recording of Mahler's Eighth Symphony won Grammys for Best Classical Album, Best Choral Performance, and Best Engineered Classical Album in 2010. The recording of John Adams' *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* won a 2013 Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance.

Some of the most important conductors of their time have been guests on the San Francisco Symphony podium, among them Bruno Walter, Leopold Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein, and Sir Georg Solti, and the list of composers who have led the Orchestra is a who's who that includes Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Maurice Ravel, Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, Aaron

Copland, and John Adams. In 1978, the appointment of John Adams as New Music Adviser became a model for composer-in-residence programs adopted by major orchestras across America. For its adventurous programming, the San Francisco Symphony has been honored nineteen times by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

The San Francisco Symphony provides the most extensive education and community programs offered by any American orchestra. Adventures in Music, the longest-running education program of its kind among this country's orchestras, brings music to every child in grades one through five in San Francisco's public schools and reaches more than 75,000 children, students, educators, and families each year. *Keeping Score*, designed to connect audiences with music and the emotions it conveys, aired on PBS-TV, is available on DVD and Blu-ray, can be accessed online at keepingscore.org, and via unlimited free streaming on the Symphony's YouTube channel. Through its radio broadcasts, the first in America to feature symphonic music when they began in 1926, the San Francisco Symphony is heard throughout the country, confirming an artistic vitality whose impact extends throughout American musical life.