



About the San Francisco Symphony

Long biography

The San Francisco Symphony is widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. 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. This exciting artistic future builds on the remarkable 25-year tenure of Michael Tilson Thomas as the San Francisco Symphony’s Music Director. Tilson Thomas continues his relationship with the Symphony as its first Music Director Laureate.

The San Francisco Symphony presents more than 220 concerts and presentations annually for an audience of nearly 450,000 in its home of Davies Symphony Hall and through its active national and international touring. A cornerstone of the organization’s mission, the San Francisco Symphony’s education programs are the most extensive offered by any American orchestra today, providing free comprehensive music education to every first-through fifth-grade student in the San Francisco public schools, and serving more than 75,000 children, students, educators, and families annually. In 2020, the Symphony introduced the digital Music Connects program, which offers a variety of content, activities, and lessons that support music education at home.

Innovation is a central theme of the San Francisco Symphony’s artistic vision and programming initiatives. In 2001, the SF Symphony became the first American orchestra to launch its own in-house record label SFS Media. Recorded live in concert and engineered at Davies Symphony Hall, SFS Media recordings showcase music by American composers as well as core classical masterworks, reflective of the Symphony’s broad range of programming. San Francisco Symphony radio broadcasts, the first in the nation to feature symphonic music when they began in 1926, today carry the Orchestra’s concerts across the country. In 2004, the SF Symphony launched the groundbreaking multimedia *Keeping Score* series on PBS-TV and the web; the series was made available for unlimited free streaming on the Symphony’s YouTube channel in 2020. In 2014, the San Francisco Symphony inaugurated SoundBox, an experimental and eclectic live music series, which takes place in an alternative performance space located backstage at Davies Symphony Hall. The Symphony’s most recent projects include the launch of the digital CURRENTS series, which explores the relationships between classical music and other musical cultures through videos and podcasts, and the intimate 1:1 Concerts series presented by one musician to one audience member at a time.

For its adventurous programming, the Symphony has been honored nineteen times by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, and the Symphony’s recordings have garnered such awards as France’s Grand Prix du Disque and Britain’s *Gramophone* Award, as well as 15 Grammys.