JUNE 2025

SF SYMPHONY



ESA-PEKKA SALONEN
Music Director

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SF SYMPHONY



June 2025

2024–25 Season | Vol. IV, No. 10

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Cover: Esa-Pekka Salonen
Photo: Cody Pickens
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SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY EDITORIAL
Steven Ziegler, *Director* • Benjamin Pesetsky, *Associate Director*
Hayley Kellner, *Project Manager*

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Encore Media Group
1631 15th Ave W, Suite 219
Seattle, WA 98119-2796
206.443.0445
info@encoremediagroup.com
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SF SYMPHONY

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WELCOME


Cody Pickens

Over the past five years, Esa-Pekka Salonen has led the San Francisco Symphony through a transformative era, defined by exceptional creativity and artistic exploration. It is only fitting that Esa-Pekka has chosen Mahler's Second Symphony—a work of profound significance to the San Francisco Symphony—to conclude both the 2024–25 season and his tenure as Music Director.

Collaboration has been at the heart of Esa-Pekka's leadership. His work with the Symphony's eight Collaborative Partners, along with signature projects with artists like Peter Sellars and Alonzo King, has pushed the boundaries of what an orchestra can be. The richly multisensory production of Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, created with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Cartier, brought audiences an experience unlike anything seen before.

Championing new music has also been a hallmark of his tenure. Through key commissions and premieres, Esa-Pekka has amplified the voices of composers including Gabriella Smith, Samuel Adams, Fang Man, Anders Hillborg, Jesper Nordin, Magnus Lindberg, and Emerging Black Composers Project winners Trevor Weston, Jens Ibsen, and Xavier Muzik. Deeply inspired by the creative energy of California, Esa-Pekka also helped launch the California Festival: A Celebration of New Music, reflecting the Golden State's innovative spirit.

Under his leadership, the Symphony has expanded its reach through groundbreaking media projects. From early digital productions such as Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* and LIGETI: PARADIGMS to a Grammy-winning recording of Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater* and a new partnership with Apple Music Classical, Esa-Pekka has ushered the Symphony into a new era, bringing its artistry to audiences around the world.

Perhaps his most lasting legacy is the extraordinary group of musicians he has welcomed into the orchestra. With the appointment of 20 new musicians—including several principals—he has laid the foundation for the Symphony's bright future.

We are deeply grateful for all that Esa-Pekka has brought to the San Francisco Symphony. His impact will resonate for years to come, and as we step into a new chapter, we look ahead with excitement to what the future holds.

Priscilla B. Geeslin
Chair, San Francisco Symphony

Community Connections

Yerba Buena Gardens Festival enhances the vitality and quality of life in the parks and open spaces of Yerba Buena Gardens in downtown San Francisco through the curated presentation of admission-free music, dance, circus, poetry, theater, children's programs, and cultural celebrations reflecting the rich cultures and creativity of the region. Artistic excellence, inclusion, diversity, and innovation are at the heart of YBGF's mission. Its programs strive to provide audiences with a greater understanding of diverse art forms and cultural heritages. Everyone—regardless of circumstance or ability to pay—needs and deserves the joy, inspiration, and communal experience that only live performance offers. Presenting over 100+ programs each summer, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival is always free, outdoors, and fresh! For more information on its landmark 25th Anniversary Season, visit ybgfestival.org.



The San Francisco Symphony thrives on collaboration, and we're proud to work with the most creative, innovative groups and individuals shaping the Bay Area today.

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Known as both a composer and conductor, Esa-Pekka Salonen is the Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. He is the Conductor Laureate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009, the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he was Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor from 2008 until 2021, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the faculty of Los Angeles's Colburn School, he directs the preprofessional Negaunee Conducting Program. Salonen cofounded, and until 2018 served as the Artistic Director of, the annual Baltic Sea Festival, which invites celebrated artists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career. Releases with the San Francisco Symphony include recordings of Kaija Saariaho's opera *Adriana Mater* (a Grammy winner for Best Opera Recording), Bartók's piano concertos, as well as spatial audio recordings of several Ligeti compositions. Other recent recordings include Strauss's Four Last Songs, Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* and *Dance Suite*, and a 2018 box set of Salonen's complete Sony recordings. His compositions appear on releases from Sony, Deutsche Grammophon, and Decca; his Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, and Cello Concerto all appear on recordings he conducted himself.

Esa-Pekka Salonen is the recipient of many major awards. Most recently, he was awarded the 2024 Polar Music Prize. In 2020, he was appointed an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) by the Queen of England.



Cody Pickens

In Celebration



With the close of the 2024–25 season, we bid farewell to bassist **Chris Gilbert**, who is retiring from the San Francisco Symphony in August.

A native of St. Louis, Gilbert studied with Henry Loew at the University of Southern Illinois for two years and at the St. Louis Conservatory for a year. He was a substitute musician in the 1978–79 season before joining the San Francisco Symphony as a permanent member in December 1979, under Edo de Waart.

We thank him for his many years of service to the San Francisco Symphony and we wish him well.

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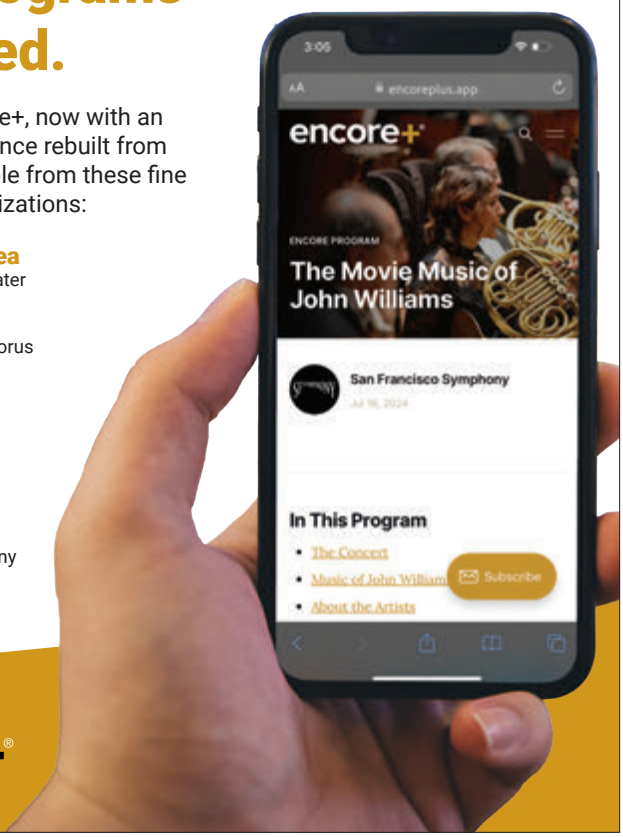
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SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

Esa-Pekka Salonen, Music Director

Michael Tilson Thomas, *Music Director Laureate*
Herbert Blomstedt, *Conductor Laureate*
Jenny Wong, *Chorus Director*
Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, *Resident Conductor of Engagement and Education*
Radu Paponiu, *San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra Wattis Foundation Music Director*
Aleksandra Melaniuk · Mert Yalniz, *Salonen Fellows, Colburn School of Music, Negaunee Conducting Program*
Vance George, *Chorus Director Emeritus*

FIRST VIOLINS

Alexander Barantschik, *Concertmaster*
Naoum Blinder Chair
Wyatt Underhill, *Acting Associate Concertmaster*
San Francisco Symphony Foundation Chair
Jeremy Constant, *Assistant Concertmaster*
75th Anniversary Chair
Mariko Smiley, *Acting Assistant Concertmaster*
Paula & John Gambs Second Century Chair
Melissa Kleinbart
Katharine Hanrahan Chair
Yun Chu
Naomi Kazama Hull
In Sun Jang
Jeein Kim
Isaac Stern Chair
Suzanne Leon
Leor Maltinski
Sarn Oliver
Florin Parvulescu
Victor Romasevich
Catherine Van Hoesen
Catherine A. Mueller Chair
Sarah Knutson†

*On leave
†Substitute Musician

The San Francisco Symphony string section uses revolving seating. Players listed in alphabetical order change seats periodically.

SECOND VIOLINS

Dan Carlson, *Principal*
Dinner & Swig Families Chair
Jessie Fellows, *Acting Associate Principal*
Audrey Avis Aasen-Hull Chair
Olivia Chen, *Acting Assistant Principal*
Kelly Leon-Pearce
The Eucalyptus Foundation
Second Century Chair
Raushan Akhmedyarova
David Chernyavsky
John Chisholm
Cathryn Down
Darlene Gray
Stan & Lenora Davis Chair
Kum Mo Kim
Polina Sedukh
Chen Zhao
Yuna Lee†

VIOLAS

Jonathan Vinocour, *Principal*
Yun Jie Liu, *Associate Principal*
Katie Kadarauch, *Assistant Principal*
Katarzyna Bryla
Joanne E. Harrington & Lorry I. Lokey
Second Century Chair
Gina Cooper
David Gaudry
David Kim
Christina King
Leonid Plashinov-Johnson
Nanci Severance
Adam Smyla
Matthew Young

CELLOS

Rainer Eudeikis, *Principal*
Philip S. Boone Chair
Anne Richardson, *Associate Principal*
Peter & Jacqueline Hoefer Chair
Amos Yang, *Assistant Principal*
Karel & Lida Urbanek Chair
Davis You
Lyman & Carol Casey
Second Century Chair
Barbara Andres
The Stanley S. Langendorf Foundation
Second Century Chair
Barbara Bogatin
Phyllis Blair Cello Chair
Vacant
Gary & Kathleen Heidenreich
Second Century Chair
Sébastien Gingras
Penelope Clark Second Century Chair
David Goldblatt
Christine & Pierre Lamond
Second Century Chair
Shu-Yi Pai†
Elizabeth C. Peters Cello Chair

BASSES

Scott Pingel, *Principal*
Daniel G. Smith, *Associate Principal*
Stephen Tramontozzi, *Assistant Principal*
Richard & Rhoda Goldman Chair
Bowen Ha
Lawrence Metcalf Second Century Chair
Charles Chandler
Chris Gilbert
Brian Marcus
Orion Miller
S. Mark Wright

Lead support for the San Francisco Symphony's string sections in the 2024–25 season is provided by Iris and Michael Chan.
Second Century Chairs are supported in part by the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Foundation, ensuring the ongoing artistic excellence of the San Francisco Symphony's string sections.
Alexander Barantschik plays the 1742 Guarneri del Gesù violin, on loan from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
Radu Paponiu's appointment as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra is generously supported by the Paul L. and Phyllis Wattis Endowment Fund for the Youth Orchestra Conductor.

The San Francisco Symphony is among the most adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education and community engagement programs. Since it was established in 1911, the Symphony has a grown in acclaim under a succession of distinguished music directors: Henry Hadley, Alfred Hertz, Basil Cameron, Issay Dobrowen, Pierre Monteux, Enrique Jordá, Josef Krips, Seiji Ozawa, Edo de Waart, Herbert Blomstedt, and Michael Tilson Thomas. Now led by the visionary conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen, who completes his tenure as the Symphony's 12th Music Director at the end of the 2024–25 season, the San Francisco Symphony is redefining the orchestral landscape for the modern era. The Symphony is deeply committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians and music lovers through a comprehensive range of educational programs. These include Adventures in Music and Music and Mentors, which serve more than 25,000 San Francisco public school students annually; interactive youth and family concerts; heritage events; and the prestigious, tuition-free San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. With a reputation for artistic daring and a dedication to excellence, innovation, and community engagement, the San Francisco Symphony continues to shape the future of orchestral music, making a lasting impact on the cultural fabric of San Francisco and the world. For more information, visit sfsymphony.org.

FLUTES
Yubeen Kim, *Principal*
Caroline H. Hume Chair
Blair Francis Paponiu, *Associate Principal*
Catherine & Russell Clark Chair
Linda Lukas
Alfred S. & Dede Wilsey Chair
Catherine Payne, *Piccolo*
The Rainbow Piccolo Chair

OBOES
Eugene Izotov, *Principal*
Edo de Waart Chair
James Button, *Associate Principal*
Brooks Fisher†
Dr. William D. Clinite Chair
Russ de Luna, *English Horn*
Joseph & Pauline Scafidi Chair

CLARINETS
Carey Bell, *Principal*
William R. & Gretchen B. Kimball Chair
Matthew Griffith, *Associate Principal & E-flat Clarinet*
Yuhsin Galaxy Su
Jerome Simas, *Bass Clarinet*

BASSOONS
Joshua Elmore, *Principal*
Stephen Paulson, *Associate Principal*
Justin Cummings
Vacant, *Contrabassoon*

HORNS
Vacant, *Principal*
Vacant, *Associate Principal*
Jesse Clevenger†, *Acting Assistant Principal*
Jonathan Ring*
Jessica Valeri
Chris Cooper†

Learn More: For more on the SF Symphony musicians, visit sfsymphony.org/musicians

TRUMPETS
Mark Inouye, *Principal*
William G. Irwin Charity Foundation Chair
Aaron Schuman, *Associate Principal*
Peter Pastreich Chair
Guy Piddington
Ann L. & Charles B. Johnson Chair
Jeff Biancalana

TROMBONES
Timothy Higgins, *Principal*
Robert L. Samter Chair
Nicholas Platoff*, *Associate Principal*
Paul Welcomer
Christopher Bassett, *Bass Trombone*

TUBA
Jeffrey Anderson, *Principal*
James Irvine Chair

HARP
Katherine Siochi, *Principal*

TIMPANI
Edward Stephan, *Principal*
Marcia & John Goldman Chair
Vacant, *Assistant Principal*

PERCUSSION
Jacob Nissly, *Principal*
Stan Muncy
James Lee Wyatt III

LIBRARIANS
Margo Kieser, *Principal*
Nancy & Charles Geschke Chair
Matt Holland-Gray, *Assistant*
Matthew Searing, *Assistant*

Tim Wilson, *Stage Manager*
Michael "Barney" Barnard,
Stage Technician
Jon Johannsen, *Recording Engineer/ Stage Technician*
Bryan Zimmerman, *Stage Technician*

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY CHORUS
Members of the American Guild of Musical Artists

SOPRANOS
Morgan Balfour
Cheryl Cain*
Phoebe Chee
Tonia D'Amelio†
Cara Gabrielson
Ellen Leslie
Jennifer Mitchell
Aimée Puentes, *In Memoriam*
Natalia Salemmo

ALTOS
Terry A. Alvord
Margaret (Peg) Lisi
Brielle Marina Neilson
Leandra Ramm
Dr. Meghan Spyker
Kyle S. Tingzon
Merilyn Telle Vaughn
Heidi L. Waterman

TENORS
Seth Brenzel
Elliott JG Encarnación
Sam Faustine
Kevin Gibbs
Michael Jankosky*
Benjamin Liupaogo
Joachim Luis
Darita Seth†
Jack Wilkins

BASSES
Adam Cole
Harlan J. Hays
Clayton Moser
Matthew C. Peterson
Chung-Wai Soong
Michael Taylor
David Varnum
Nick Volkert

IN GOOD TIME

Esa-Pekka Salonen looks back on his time as SF Symphony Music Director

BY TIM GREIVING

THE PANDEMIC SHUTDOWN OF 2020 arrived at a moment of major transition for the San Francisco Symphony, silencing the stage as Michael Tilson Thomas prepared to take his final bows as music director and Esa-Pekka Salonen was about to assume the mantle. What was meant to be a celebratory handoff became a season of cancellations—no farewell concerts for Tilson Thomas, and no official debut for Salonen.

The past few years have brought their share of challenges, but as Salonen embarks on his final concerts in his final season as San Francisco's music director, he is in a thoughtful, grateful mood—quick to praise this orchestra and to think fondly on his time here.

"I inherited a very good orchestra," he says, via Zoom from Salzburg, where he is rehearsing Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra for the Salzburg Easter Festival.

The Finnish double threat, 66, began his composing career in the early 1980s with a concerto for saxophone and orchestra. He made his conducting debut in 1979, with his hometown Finnish Radio Symphony, and was appointed music director of the Swedish Radio Symphony in 1985. A last-minute substitution for Tilson Thomas in London in 1983 attracted the attention of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, who lured him to America in 1992—and for the next 17 years he significantly reshaped the Los Angeles orchestra. It was in the midst of his tenure in LA when he was invited to conduct the San Francisco Symphony for the first time.

He still vividly remembers that debut, on Thursday, April 1, 2004—a program that included the West Coast premiere of his piece *Insomnia* (composed in the wake of 9/11) and Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto. The audience that week met the visiting conductor with ecstatic standing ovations, and Salonen has "a very nice memory of the concert, and the way it went, and the way the orchestra played," he says. "And of course it was very different, temperamentally, from the Los Angeles Philharmonic—which is not a surprise, obviously. So it took me a little bit of adjusting to get used to their way of reacting to things and so on. But this is normal. This happens always when a conductor goes to a new orchestra; it's a mutual adjustment process, basically—reaction, impulse, reaction, feedback."

When asked what exactly that unique temperament *is*, he muses: "It's interesting how some of the DNA of an orchestra doesn't change. The San Francisco Symphony then, already, I thought had this very pronounced lyrical quality to their playing, and a sort of natural, expressive, beautiful phrasing that they were intuitively producing, without any particular guidance from me on the box. This was like their default position. I thought: that's interesting, because it's still there, the expressive turn of the phrase. I think it's been there for a long time, since the days of, I don't know, Pierre Monteux maybe…"

"Sometimes," he adds, "certain traditions are passed on from





Kristen Loken










SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY
IGOR STRAVINSKY
THE FIREBIRD
ESA-PEKKA SALONEN
MUSIC DIRECTOR




generation to generation, and we don't quite know how it works. I've seen this so many times but I'm not sure what exactly the mechanism is, whether it's some kind of osmosis, or whether it's verbal—or whether it's just like when fish swim in a perfect formation, so they synchronize their movements perfectly and we don't quite know what the mechanism is, because we don't know who the lead fish is. But it's just like, one fish reads the three closest ones, and so on. It's a slightly mysterious thing, but it's there."

Salonen spent much of his post-LA Phil years concentrating on writing his own music. But when, in 2018, this lyrical school of fish invited him to be their next music director, he called it a "no-brainer."

Despite navigating the learning curve that faced this new maestro-orchestra relationship—an aborted inaugural season, tentative first concerts back with distanced audiences and smaller ensembles—he fell into an easy rhythm with the players. "That happened surprisingly and impressively quickly," he says. He specifically thinks back on their performances of Mahler's Second Symphony in October 2022, his first time conducting Mahler with his new orchestra. "MTT/SFS has been the official Mahler combo for decades, and before the first rehearsal I was imagining trying to kind of steer a train or something like that. But it wasn't a train; it was totally open. 'Okay, we know this piece very well, but what do *you* want to do with it?' And I thought: all right—I have arrived. That was a significant moment."

Salonen also inherited a diverse, omnivorous programming tradition from Tilson Thomas. "It felt very easy for me to take over from MTT in this way," he says, "because his programming has been like a model for us younger conductors. But what he did, what he has always been doing, has been very open, very curious, very provocative at times, and sometimes the juxtapositions he has come up with have been absolutely brilliant. He did that a lot in San Francisco, so they were not particularly surprised by what I was doing, because it wasn't that far off from their bread-and-butter."

Salonen looks back at many highlights and cherished moments in these past five years. There were a number of premieres—piano concertos by both Nico Muhly and Magnus Lindberg, *Strange Beasts* by Emerging Black Composers Project winner Xavier Muzik, *No Such Spring* by Samuel Adams, and more. And while he doesn't want to name any favorites, Salonen is happy to say "there have been a few premieres where we all felt that, okay, we have been the midwife to something that will have a long life. That's the most satisfying thing. And obviously we cannot predict that, but when you collectively sense that, okay, this is important—that's a really good feeling."

New recordings during his time in San Francisco have included warhorses by Stravinsky, Berlioz, and Prokofiev, as well as spatial audio recordings of the music of Ligeti. The most poignant and personal for Salonen was the premiere recording of Kaija Saariaho's opera *Adriana Mater*. "Peter Sellars and I premiered the opera in Paris in 2006, and worked closely with Kaija," he says. "It was just a coincidence that Kaija passed away during the week of rehearsals for the concert performance of her opera, and her daughter was my assistant conductor. Here we were, having another crack on it—without *her*. And then to have a document made of that, I think that's very important, personally." The recording won a Grammy earlier this year for Best Opera Recording.

Salonen acknowledges the challenges facing the organization while emphasizing the special relationship he has cultivated with the musicians of the Orchestra during his time here. "I've been so impressed and touched by the quality and commitment on stage every night," he says, "We cannot control what happens outside. But somehow, every concert has been highly enjoyable, and very intense in my experience."

He already knows what he'll be doing on the first morning after his final concert—which is Mahler's Second Symphony, appropriately, on June 14. He's in the midst of composing a concerto for Stefan Dohr, principal horn of the Berlin Philharmonic, and the premiere is in August. "Most likely," he says, "I will get up early and go back to writing."

BY THE NUMBERS

20
New musicians hired by Esa-Pekka Salonen, including four principal players and Chorus Director Jenny Wong

16
New audio recordings, including releases on SFS Media via Apple Music Classical and a Grammy-winning Deutsche Grammophon recording of Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*

15
World and US premieres conducted by Salonen

5
Digital video productions featuring Salonen

3
Staged productions in collaboration with director Peter Sellars

---

Tim Greiving is an arts journalist and historian in Los Angeles who specializes in film music, and the author of the forthcoming biography, *John Williams: A Composer's Life* (Oxford University Press, September 2025). Find him at timgreiving.com.

Top row: Re-Opening Night with Alonzo King LINES Ballet, 2021 / Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, digital production directed by Netia Jones, 2022 / Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex*, directed by Peter Sellars, 2022
Second row: With Peter Sellars following *Adriana Mater*, 2023 / On the roof of Davies Symphony Hall during the filming of SoundBox: Patterns, 2020 / With SF Symphony Chorus Director Jenny Wong and pianist Igor Levit following Busoni's Piano Concerto, 2023
Third row: World premiere of Jesper Nordin's *Convergence* with Collaborative Partner Pekka Kuusisto, 2023 / Re-Opening Night, 2021 / SFS Media album cover, 2024
Fourth row: Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*, 2023 / Collaborative Partner Julia Bullock in concert, 2023 / Scriabin's *Promethus: The Poem of Fire*, presented in collaboration with Cartier, 2024

Photos: Drew Altizer Photography, Stefan Cohen, Brittany Hosea-Small, Kristen Loken, Brandon Patoc

CALENDAR


SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY CHORUS
JUN 12–14 | JUN 20 & 22

JUN 4
Shenson Spotlight Series
Xavier Foley double bass
Music of J.S. BACH and XAVIER FOLEY

JUN 6–8
Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor
San Francisco Symphony
RICHARD STRAUSS *Don Juan*
JEAN SIBELIUS Symphony No. 7
GABRIELLA SMITH *Rewilding* [World Premiere]
RICHARD STRAUSS *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*

JUN 12–14
[Open Rehearsal on Jun 12]
Esa-Pekka Salonen conductor
Heidi Stober soprano
Sasha Cooke mezzo-soprano
San Francisco Symphony Chorus,
Jenny Wong director
San Francisco Symphony
GUSTAV MAHLER Symphony No. 2

JUN 15
Chamber Music with SF Symphony Musicians
CAROLINE SHAW *Entr'acte*
ANTON ARENSKY Cello Quartet
ALEKSEY IGUDESMAN Latin Suite for Two Violas
JOHANNES BRAHMS String Quartet No. 3

JUN 20 & 22
James Gaffigan conductor
Rachel Willis-Sørensen soprano
Jamie Barton mezzo-soprano
Mario Chang tenor
Morris Robinson bass
San Francisco Symphony Chorus,
Jenny Wong conductor and director
San Francisco Symphony
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
Ave verum corpus, K.618
GORDON GETTY Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*
GORDON GETTY *Saint Christopher* [World Premiere]
GORDON GETTY *The Old Man in the Snow*
GIUSEPPE VERDI Requiem


RACHEL WILLIS-SØRENSEN
JUN 20 & 22

JUN 26–27
BLACKSTAR Symphony: The Music of David Bowie
Donny McCaslin artistic director
Vince Mendoza conductor
John Cameron Mitchell guest artist
Gail Ann Dorsey & **David Poe** vocalists
Jason Lindner keyboard
Jonathan Maron bass
Zach Danziger drums
San Francisco Symphony

SUMMER WITH THE SYMPHONY

JUL 4
Shoreline Amphitheatre
Fourth of July Fireworks Spectacular
Edwin Outwater conductor
Taimane ukulele and vocals
San Francisco Symphony

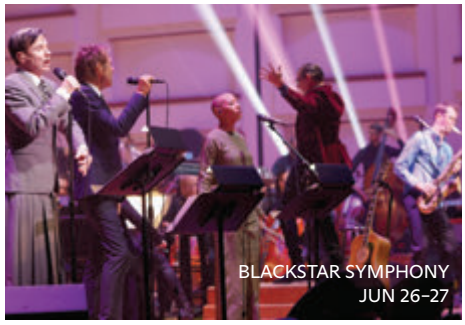
UPCOMING COMMUNITY CHAMBER CONCERTS

JUN 21 at 3:00pm
SF Public Library Main Branch

JUL 19 at 2:00pm
SF Public Library West Portal Branch

Learn more:
sfsymphony.org/CommunityChamber

JUL 6
Stern Grove Festival
Edwin Outwater conductor
Taimane ukulele and vocals
San Francisco Symphony
Free outdoor concert


BLACKSTAR SYMPHONY
JUN 26–27

JUL 10
Frost Amphitheater
JUL 11
Davies Symphony Hall
Tchaikovsky Spectacular
Stephanie Childress conductor
Blake Pouliot violin
San Francisco Symphony
PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Selections from *The Sleeping Beauty*
Violin Concerto
Romeo and Juliet, Fantasy-Overture
1812 Overture

For complete details and calendar, visit sfsymphony.org.
Buy tickets online or through the Symphony Box Office: 415.864.6000.

All performances are with the SF Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall unless otherwise noted.

VERDI REQUIEM AND GORDON GETTY
THE CONCERT

Friday, June 20, 2025, at 7:30pm
Sunday, June 22, 2025, at 2:00pm

James Gaffigan conducting

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART *Ave verum corpus*, K.618 (1791)

GORDON GETTY

Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (2017)
Concert Premiere

Saint Christopher (2024)
World Premiere

The Old Man in the Snow (2020)
First San Francisco Symphony Performances

San Francisco Symphony Chorus
Jenny Wong director

Intermission

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Messa da Requiem (1874)
Requiem
Dies irae
Offertorio
Sanctus
Agnus Dei
Lux aeterna
Libera me

Rachel Willis-Sørensen soprano
Jamie Barton mezzo-soprano
Mario Chang tenor
Morris Robinson bass
San Francisco Symphony Chorus
Jenny Wong director

Lead support for the San Francisco Symphony Chorus this season is provided through a visionary gift from an anonymous donor.
The June 20 concert is generously sponsored by Moira Conzelman in memory of her husband, Bruce Conzelman.

AT A GLANCE

In this special concert, James Gaffigan leads the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus in **Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem**, the Symphony's first time performing it since 2011. Crude as a gut punch, tender as a kiss, this Requiem translates the Latin mass for the dead into the vivid and visceral idiom of Italian opera.

On the first half, after Mozart's choral jewel *Ave verum corpus*, are three recent choral works by San Francisco composer **Gordon Getty**, including premieres of the **Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*** and ***Saint Christopher***.

Ave verum corpus, K.618

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born: January 27, 1756, in Salzburg
Died: December 5, 1791, in Vienna

Work Composed: 1791
SF Symphony Performances: First—April 1965. Josef Krips conducted with the Stanford University Chorus. Most recent—April 2013. Bernard Labadie conducted with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus.
Instrumentation: chorus, organ, and strings
Duration: About 3 minutes



The *Ave verum corpus* is Mozart's most exquisitely simple and briefest music to a sacred text. Together with his last piano concerto, completed in January 1791, and parts of *The Magic Flute*, it raises the forever unanswerable question whether Mozart in his last years might have been searching for a new simplicity of style after the gorgeous complexities of the 1780s. We have no more exquisite example of much-in-little than this flawlessly cut jewel. The harmonies are plain, the texture hardly less so, yet in his whole life—chronologically so short, artistically so long—Mozart never invented anything more affecting than those 46 perfect measures.

He wrote the *Ave verum corpus* on June 16 and 17, 1791, while visiting his wife and their son Karl at Baden, a spa near Vienna. The work was a gift for Anton Stoll, organist and choirmaster of the Baden parish church. Stoll likely led the first performance, probably on June 23, 1791, the Feast of Corpus Christi.

—Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg, the San Francisco Symphony's program annotator from 1979 to 1999 and a contributing writer until his death in 2009, was one of the nation's preeminent writers on music.

Selected Choral Works

GORDON GETTY

Born: December 20, 1933, in Los Angeles

Works Composed: 2017–23
First SF Symphony Performances
Instrumentation: Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*—chorus, flute, oboe (doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, contrabassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, 2 trombones, marimba, vibraphone, harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings
Saint Christopher—chorus, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, tubular bells, harpsichord, Baroque organ, and strings
The Old Man in the Snow—chorus, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (glockenspiel, vibraphone, tubular bells, xylophone, and marimba), harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings
Total duration: About 20 minutes



With the November 2021 premiere of his operatic film *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, San Francisco composer Gordon Getty added a fourth opera to his catalog, which also includes works for orchestra, chorus, vocal and instrumental soloists, and chamber ensembles. His staged works have been mounted by Leipzig Opera, Welsh National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Bolshoi Ballet, while his orchestral repertoire has been recorded and performed by the San Francisco Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas, the Russian National Orchestra with Mikhail Pletnev, and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields with Neville Marriner. Getty's life in music is the subject of Peter Rosen's 2016 documentary *There Will Be Music*. Recent honors include the European Culture Prize and an inaugural induction into Opera America's Hall of Fame. Getty is a Pentatone artist and his music is published by Rork Music.

THE MUSIC

The Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* comes from his latest opera, based on James Hilton's popular 1934 novella of the same name, as well as other stories by the author. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* tells the heart-warming story of a teacher at Brookfield, an all-boys English boarding school to which "Chips" dedicates most of his adult life. The opera chronicles Chips's story of love, loss, and learning over his decades-long tenure at Brookfield. The Intermezzo serves as an entr'acte before the second act, featuring the reprise of a chorus of boarding school boys singing their school song. Both *Saint Christopher* and *The Old Man in the Snow* are set to poems by Getty. He described:

> I wrote the poem "Saint Christopher" in college days. The first four lines had been meant for an opera on Anne Frank. That idea fizzled out at the time, although I now wonder why. Anyhow, I pushed on to finish the text. The line "His hand is set upon the deep" owes much to William Cowper's "He

> plants His footsteps in the sea." Wow! Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travelers, and particularly travelers by sea, so the title seemed to fit.

The Old Man in the Snow premiered last July at Festival Napa Valley, as part of Getty's *Old Man Triptych*. He said:

> It seems that I write verse much less easily than music. It comes fast once it gets started, but somehow has to build up first from seeds inside. Here the seeds were the phrases "she is the child of beauty," "she is the child of sorrow," and "O beauty broken." They had been with me for a couple of years, I think, in search of a context, when I finally sat down to write the poem on Christmas vacation in Hawaii.

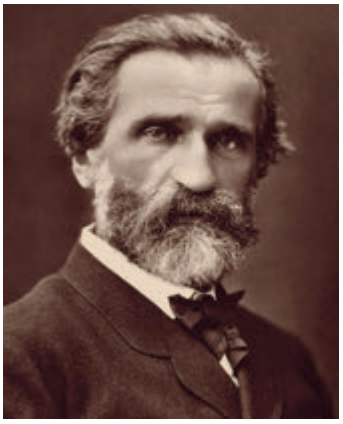
Adapted from material provided by **Rork Music.**

Messa da Requiem

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Born: October 9/10, 1813, in Roncole, near Busseto, Italy
Died: January 27, 1901, in Milan

Work Composed: 1873–74
SF Symphony Performances: First—April 1925. Alfred Hertz conducted with Helen Stanley, Mme. Charles Cahier, Rudolph Laubenthal, and Alexander Kipnis as soloists.
Most recent—October 2011. James Conlon conducted with the San Francisco Symphony Chorus and Sondra Radvanovsky, Dolora Zajick, Frank Lopardo, and Ain Anger as soloists.
Instrumentation: 4 vocal soloists (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass), chorus, 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 4 bassoons, 4 horns, 4 trumpets (some offstage), 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and strings
Duration: About 85 minutes



Giuseppe Verdi was often accused of agnosticism. His second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi, described the composer's spiritual outlook as a matter of temperament: "He's the soul of honesty, he understands and feels every noble and delicate sentiment; yet for all that, [he] allows himself to be, I won't say an atheist, but certainly not much of a believer, and all with a calm obstinance that makes you want to thrash him."

No wonder this Requiem appeals to the nonreligious. Verdi humanizes it, bringing the drama back to individuals with enormous needs: for grace, for redemption, for eternal peace, or at least an escape from torment. The soloists are relatable in the same way that opera heroes and heroines are relatable: larger than life but fatally flawed.

REQUIEM ROOTS

In 1868, soon after the death of Gioachino Rossini, Verdi envisioned a compilation Requiem in honor of the late composer, with the various parts supplied by 13 of Italy's leading composers. Verdi himself composed the final Libera me. It was not performed in 1869, as originally scheduled for the first anniversary of Rossini's death, and in fact the compilation Requiem wasn't premiered in its complete form until 1988.

Verdi was further moved in 1873 by the death of the Italian novelist and poet Alessandro Manzoni, a hero of the Risorgimento (the 19th-century Italian unification movement). He decided to revise his earlier Libera me and complete the remaining Requiem movements himself.

THE MUSIC

In the opening movement, an appeal on behalf of the recently departed for a peaceful rest, the chorus sings from the perspective of the mourners. Prefaced by austere low strings, the singers begin with the standard lines "*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine*" (Grant them eternal rest, oh Lord), which the chorus and orchestra intone with a hushed gravitas. The four solo singers join the chorus and orchestra for a jubilant **Kyrie eleison** (Lord, have mercy).

The doomy and demonic second movement, the nine-part **Dies irae** (Day of Wrath), slashes and burns through a terrifying series of scenarios wherein the sinners individually confront their wretched souls. What awaits us after death? Eternal perdition, or a joy so perfect that the most celestial fugue can only approximate it? The Dies irae is based on a poem about Judgment Day commonly attributed to Thomas of Celano, a 13th-century Franciscan monk. In his setting of the medieval text, Verdi squires us through all the stages of grief. Against punishing bass drum and shrieking piccolo, and preceded by apocalyptic brass fanfares, the choristers describe the day that fire consumes the world.

The solo quartet sings the **Offertorio**, a light-rinsed, lullaby-like testament to the creator's tender mercies. Here the four singers describe the holy radiance that God promises to bestow on Abraham and his descendants.

The **Sanctus**, a resplendent double fugue for two choruses, is sung from the angelic perspective: divinity casting a fond downward glance at the suffering humans. The angels' joy seems almost explosive, in contrast to the anguish of the human characters. Against spare orchestral accompaniment, the chorus, soprano, and later mezzo-soprano sing the **Agnus Dei**: "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest."

Sometimes a cappella and sometimes accompanied by shimmering strings and delicate winds, the mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass deliver the luminous **Lux aeterna** (Eternal light).

The soprano returns, with chorus, for the transcendent **Libera me**, which redirects our attention to the singular terrified sinner. On one level, you can appreciate the final movement as an aria, a gracefully emotive outpouring of bel canto splendor. At its climactic midpoint, the soprano's high C rips through the chorus to remind us of her individual suffering. The chorus responds, a soothing balm made of light. A wild fugue develops, jagged with accidentals, propelled past terror into panic. Is the sinner consoled or even redeemed by this onslaught of beauty, or simply distracted from the potential terrors of the afterlife? Verdi respects us too much to speak for a God he wasn't entirely sure even existed. He puts his faith in our collective capacity to figure it out for ourselves. The Requiem ends with the soprano and chorus crooning so softly that they might as well be whispering, "*Libera me*": Deliver me. Into what, who can say?

—René Spencer Saller

René Spencer Saller is the main program annotator for the Dallas Symphony and has also written for the St. Louis Symphony and Tippet Rise Art Center.
A version of this note previously appeared in the program book of the Dallas Symphony.

Mozart and Getty: Texts and Translation

Mozart: *Ave verum corpus*, K.618

Ave verum corpus,
natum de Maria Virgine;
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine,
cujus latus perforatum,
unda fluxit sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.
O dulcis, O pie,
Jesu Fili Mariae,
miserere mei.

Hail, true body,
born of the Virgin Mary,
who truly suffered the sacrifice
upon the cross for humankind,
whose side, having been pierced,
flowed with water and blood:
May you be for us a foretaste
in the trial of death.
O gentle, O merciful
Jesus, Son of Mary,
have mercy upon me.

Getty: Intermezzo from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*

Long remembered, old in story,
Lads before us come and gone.
Fare you well, lads, off to glory,
Banners high, our contest won:

We who stay will follow after,
One and all for worst and best,
Brace and beam and rail and rafter,
Each with each to stand the test,
Fellows all in tears and laughter,
Shipmates on our journey west.

—Gordon Getty

Getty: *Saint Christopher*

The birds and I
Are born to die
But we have the sky
And a place to sleep.
God keeps the shore,
God holds the sea,
In time before,
In time to be,
His hand is set upon the deep
And in His purpose He will keep.

—Gordon Getty

Getty: *The Old Man in the Snow* (In Memoriam)

I saw him once again. It was the white
Of winter, all white everywhere, all new,
The world of old rechristened in a hush
Of snowfall. Once again it seemed that he
Had found a place remembered, kept aside,
A special place where she of long ago,
Forever lost, forever held, had passed,
And once again he mused aloud. He said:

"She is the child of beauty, and she sings
What beauty sings, what willow and the thrush
And river sing, of what comes first and last,
Of air and earth and fire and water, things
All of a piece, unmingled, sure and true,
Kept each by each the same, and even so,
Of what all weave together, of the thread
That ties Uranus to his mortal bride,
Of beauty wrought when air and fire decree

Shadows of cloud banks in the westward light,
When air and earth and fire and water cast
Rainfall and rainbow, dusk and eventide,
Moonrise, a rush of wind, a rush of wings,
A star, a rush of stars, the mother night."

He paused. Again I could not leave unheard;
The snow had hardened. Best to wait him through,
Just as before. Now she of memory
Would live in mine as well, for best or worst,
A while at least, and in the thoughts of those
Who hear me. Somewhere now, far off, there rose
Voices, a dog barking, laughter. Then
He spoke once more, and in a softer key:

"She is the child of sorrow, and she knows
What sorrow knows, how one by one we first
Draw hither, one by one we choose, and reach
A hand to take a hand; we speak a word,
Then one by one must pass to whence we drew
And leave the rest in rue for what had been,
What we who knew and saw may stay to teach
To strangers in the speech and song of men.

O beauty broken, beauty taken, shorn,
Gone to the place where world and night began,
Whence beauty drew when first the world was born,
Where go the wind and snow and thrush and man
While we are left to sing and speak and mourn
And hold a name in honor while we can."

—Gordon Getty

Verdi Requiem: Text and Translation

Requiem

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.	Grant them eternal rest, oh Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon them.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion, et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem. Exaudi orationem meam. Ad te omnis caro veniet.	To you, oh God, praise is due in Zion, and homage will be done in Jerusalem. Hear my prayer. Unto you all flesh shall come.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.	Grant them eternal rest, oh Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon them.
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.	Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

Dies irae

Dies irae, dies illa Solvet saeclum in favilla, Teste David cum Sibylla.	The Day of Wrath, that day shall dissolve the world in ashes, as David and the Sibyl foretold.
Quantus tremor est futurus Quando judex est venturus Cuncta structe discussurus!	What trembling shall there be when the Judge shall come who shall thresh out all completely!
Tuba mirum spargens sonum, Per sepulchra regionum, Coget omnes ante thronum.	The trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound through the tombs of all lands, shall drive all unto the throne.
Mors stupebit et natura Cum resurget creatura Judicanti responsura.	Death and Nature shall be astounded when creation rises again to answer the Judge.
Liber scriptus proferetur, In quo totum continetur, Unde mundus judicetur.	A written book shall be brought forth, in which shall be contained all for which the world shall be judged.
Judex ergo cum sedebit, Quidquid latet apparebit, Nil inultum remanebit.	And therefore when the Judge shall sit, what is hidden shall be manifest, and nothing shall remain unavenged.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? Quem patronum rogaturus, Cum vix justus sit securus?	What shall I say in my misery? Whom shall I ask to be my advocate, when even the righteous are fearful?
Rex tremendae majestatis, Qui salvandos salvas gratis, Salva me, fons pietatis.	King of awesome majesty, who freely saves the redeemed, save me, oh fount of mercy.
Recordare, Jesu pie, Quod sum causa tuae viae, Ne me perda illa die.	Recall, merciful Jesus, that I am the cause of your journey, do not lose me on that day.
Quaerens me, sedisti lassus, Redemisti crucem passus; Tantus labor non sit cassus.	Seeking me, you sat down weary; you redeemed me, suffering on the cross; let it not have been in vain.
Juste Judex ultionis, Donum fac remissionis Ante diem rationis.	Oh Just Judge of vengeance, give the gift of remission before the day of reckoning.

Ingemisco tamquam reus:
Culpa rubet vultus meus.
Supplicanti parce Deus.

I groan as one guilty:
my face blushes at my sin.
Spare your supplicant, oh God.

Qui Mariam absolvisti
Et latronem exaudisti,
Mihi quoque spem dedisti.

You who absolved Mary
and heard the thief's prayer
have given me hope also.

Preces meae non sunt dignae,
Sed to bonus fac benigne,
Ne perenni cremer igne.

My prayers are not worthy,
but show mercy, good Lord,
lest I burn in everlasting fire.

Inter oves locum praesta
Et ab haedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Give me a place among your sheep
and put me apart from the goats,
setting me on the right hand.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis,
Voca me cum benedictis.

When the damned are confounded
and consigned to sharp flames,
call me with the blessed.

Oro supplex at acclinis,
Cor contritum quasi cinis,
Gere curam mei finis.

I pray, kneeling in supplication,
a heart contrite as ashes,
take my ending into your care.

Lacrymosa dies illa
Qua resurget ex favilla
Judicandus homo reus.

Lamentable is the day
on which the guilty shall arise
from the ashes to be judged.

Huic ergo parce, Deus,
Pie Jesu Domine:
Dona eis requiem. Amen.

Spare this one, oh God.
Merciful Lord Jesus:
Grant them rest. Amen.

Offertorio

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae,
libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum
de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu:
libera eas de ore leonis,
ne absorbeat eas Tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum.

Oh Lord, Jesus Christ, King of Glory,
deliver the souls of all the departed faithful
from the torments of hell and from the bottomless pit;
deliver them from the mouth of the lion,
lest Tartarus swallow them, lest they fall into the darkness.

Sed signifer sanctus Michael
repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam,
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti
et semini eius.

But let Saint Michael the standard-bearer
bring them forth into the holy light,
which you once promised to Abraham
and his seed.

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus.
Tu suscipe pro animabus illis
quarum hodie memoriam facimus.
Fac eas, Domine,
de morte transire ad vitam.
Quam olim Abrahae promisisti
et semini eius.

To you, oh Lord, we give our offerings and prayers with praises.
Receive them for those souls
whom we commemorate today.
Make them, oh Lord,
pass from death to life,
which you once promised
to Abraham and his seed.

Libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum
de poenis inferni.
Fac eas de morte transire ad vitam.

Deliver the souls of all the departed faithful
from the torments of hell.
Make them pass from death to life.

Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Domine Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona eis requiem.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
grant them rest.

Lux aeterna

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,
cum Sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.

Let everlasting light shine on them, oh Lord,
with your saints forever,
for you are merciful.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Grant them eternal rest, oh Lord,
and let everlasting light shine upon them.

Libera me

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda quando coeli movendi sunt et terra;
dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Deliver me, oh Lord, from eternal death
in that awful day when the heavens and the earth shall be moved;
when you will come to judge the world by fire.

Tremens factus sum ego et timeo,
dum discussio venerit atque ventura ira,
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra.

I tremble, and I fear
the trial and the wrath to come,
when the heavens and the earth shall be moved.

Dies irae, dies illa calamitatis et miseriae,
dies magna et amara valde.

A day of wrath, that day of calamity and woe,
a great day and bitter indeed.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis,

Grant them eternal rest, oh Lord,
and let everlasting light shine upon them.

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,
in die illa tremenda,
quando coeli movendi sunt et terra;
dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Deliver me, oh Lord, from eternal death
in that awful day
when the heavens and the earth shall be moved;
when you will come to judge the world by fire.

Libera me.

Deliver me.

About the Artists



JAMES GAFFIGAN

American conductor James Gaffigan is general music director of Berlin Comic Opera and music director of the Queen Sofía Palace of the Arts in Valencia, Spain. As an orchestral conductor, he regularly works with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, and Metropolitan Opera. In Europe, he has appeared with the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Berlin Staatskapelle, Czech Philharmonic, Bavarian State Opera, and Vienna State Opera.

Gaffigan's previous titles include principal guest conductor of both the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra and Opera, chief conductor of the Lucerne Symphony, and assistant conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra. He made his San Francisco Symphony debut in December 2006, served as Associate Conductor from 2006–09, and will return for three programs next season. He was first prize winner of the 2004 Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition.



RACHEL WILLIS-SØRENSEN

Rachel Willis-Sørensen began this season with a return to the role of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* in concert with Les Musiciens du Louvre. She then returned to the Metropolitan Opera to perform Leonora in *Il trovatore*, which she also sang in March at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She made her house debut at the Teatro di San Carlo as Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*, and made her debut at the Philharmonie de Paris in a concert version of *La Traviata*. In the spring, she made her role and house debut in the title role of *Norma* at the Berlin State Opera. She makes her San Francisco Symphony debut with these performances.

Previous engagements include San Francisco Opera (most recently as the title role in *Rusalka*), LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glyndebourne, Paris Opera, and Vienna State Opera, among others. She signed a multi-record deal with Sony Classical, which released her debut album in 2022 and Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* in 2023. Willis-Sørensen won first prizes at the 2014 Operalia Competition and at the 2011 Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition, and she was a winner of the 2010 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.



JAMIE BARTON

Jamie Barton is increasingly recognized for how she uses her powerful instrument offstage—lifting up women, queer people, and other marginalized communities. Her lively social media presence serves as a hub for conversations about body positivity, social justice issues, and LGBTQ+ rights. In recognition of her performance at the Last Night of the Proms, Barton was named 2020 Personality of the Year at the *BBC Music Magazine* Awards. She is also the winner of the Beverly Sills Artist Award, Richard Tucker Award, both Main and Song Prizes at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Her solo albums include *All Who Wander*, which received the 2018 *BBC Music Magazine* Vocal Award, and *Unexpected Shadows*, nominated for a 2022 Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. She made her San Francisco Symphony debut in 2021's Holiday Gaiety program.

This season, Barton made a dual role and company debut as Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress* at Paris Opera and sang Azucena in the Metropolitan Opera's *Il trovatore*. She also debuted as Nettie Fowler in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel* with Boston Lyric Opera before appearing as Amneris in Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's *Aïda*. She opened the Danish Radio Symphony season in *Das Lied von der Erde* and returned to the BBC Proms for Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder* with BBC Symphony.



MARIO CHANG

Mario Chang has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, the Italian Tenor in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the Fourth Squire in *Parsifal*. He has also performed at Los Angeles Opera as Rodolfo in *La bohème* and as Ismaele in *Nabucco*; at Santa Fe Opera as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*; and with Washington National Opera, Atlanta Opera, and Opera Frankfurt as Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He made his Hollywood Bowl debut as Cassio in *Otello* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and has appeared at Carnegie Hall.

Chang was a member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Met and holds an advanced diploma from the Juilliard School. His awards include first prize, zarzuela prize, and audience favorite at the 2014 Operalia Competition, as well as first prize, Plácido Domingo Prize, and Amigos de Sabadell Prize in the Francisco Viñas Competition. A native of Guatemala, he is the founder and director of Querido Arte Ópera de Guatemala, the first opera company in the country, and was appointed an ambassador of peace and culture by the Guatemalan government. He made his San Francisco Symphony debut in July 2016.



MORRIS ROBINSON

This season, Morris Robinson returned to the Metropolitan Opera for a new production of *Aïda*, Houston Grand Opera for *Il trovatore*, and Atlanta Opera in *Macbeth*, and appears in concert with the National Symphony and Boston Symphony. He has performed with many of the world's leading opera companies including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Cincinnati Opera, La Scala, and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. Also a prolific concert singer, Robinson has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony, São Paulo Symphony, and NDR Elbphilharmonie. In recital he has been presented by Spivey Hall in Atlanta, the Savannah Music Festival, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Carnegie Hall as part of Jessye Norman's *HONOR!* Festival. He made his San Francisco Symphony debut in 2017's Handel's *Messiah*.

Robinson's first album, *Going Home*, was released by Decca. He is also a featured artist on the LA Phil's recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 8, which won the 2022 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance. An Atlanta native, he is a graduate of the Citadel and an alumnus of the Metropolitan Lindemann Young Artists Program.



JENNY WONG

Jenny Wong is Chorus Director of the San Francisco Symphony, as well as the associate artistic director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Recent conducting engagements include the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella Series, Los Angeles Opera Orchestra, the Industry, Long Beach Opera, Pasadena Symphony and Pops, Phoenix Chorale, and Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles.

She has prepared choruses for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, including for a recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 that won a 2022 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance. She has also prepared choruses for the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and Music Academy of the West.

A native of Hong Kong, Wong received her doctor of musical arts and master of music degrees from the University of Southern California and her undergraduate degree in voice performance from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She won two consecutive world champion titles at the World Choir Games 2010 and the International Johannes Brahms Choral Competition 2011.

ABOUT THE SF SYMPHONY CHORUS

The San Francisco Symphony Chorus was established in 1973 at the request of Seiji Ozawa, then the Symphony's Music Director. The Chorus, numbering 32 professional and more than 120 volunteer members, now performs more than 26 concerts each season. Louis Magor served as the Chorus's director during its first decade. In 1982 Margaret Hillis assumed the ensemble's leadership, and the following year Vance George was named Chorus Director, serving through 2005–06. Ragnar Bohlin concluded his tenure as Chorus Director in 2021, a post he had held since 2007. Jenny Wong was named Chorus Director in September 2023.

The Chorus can be heard on many acclaimed San Francisco Symphony recordings and has received Grammy Awards for Best Performance of a Choral Work (for Orff's *Carmina burana*, Brahms's German Requiem, and Mahler's Symphony No. 8), Best Classical Album (for a Stravinsky collection and for Mahler's Symphony No. 3 and Symphony No. 8), and most recently Best Opera Recording (for Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*).

Lead support for the San Francisco Symphony Chorus this season is provided through a visionary gift from an anonymous donor. To learn more about their generous gift, a new Chorus endowment, and ways to support it, please contact Jay Auslander, *Director of Legacy Giving*, at 415.503.5404 or jauslander@sfsymphony.org.

IN CELEBRATION

The San Francisco Symphony Chorus would like to congratulate and thank **Carol Copperud**, a member of the alto section, who retires this season after **50 years** with the ensemble.

Carol joined the Chorus in 1975, shortly after its founding, and has been a dedicated member ever since. Over the years, she has lent her voice to multiple Grammy Award–winning albums, the 2001 Carnegie Hall tour, and at least 150 performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

The Chorus, along with the entire San Francisco Symphony organization, celebrates her achievement and wishes her the very best in her next chapter.

SFSYMPHONY

San Francisco Symphony Chorus

SOPRANOS
Elaine Abigail
Naheed Attari
Sylvia V. Baba
Kayla Bojkovsky*
Arlene Boyd
Olivia T. Brown
Laura Canavan
Phoebe Chee*#
Mun-Wai Chung
Francielle De Barros
Andrea Drummond
Tonia D'Amelio*
Cara Gabrielson*
Susanna Gilbert
Julia Hall
Betsy Johnsmiller
Anna Keyta*
Elizabeth Kimble*
Jennifer Mitchell*
Diana Pray*
Laura Stanfield Prichard
Shroothi P. Ramesh
Kelly Ryer
Natalia Salemmo*#
Rebecca Shipan
Sarah Vig
Lauren Wilbanks

ALTOS
Carolyn Alexander
Christina E. F. Barbaro
Melissa Butcher
Celeste Camarena
Enrica Casucci
Carol Copperud
Sara Couden*
Dr. Nicole Daamen
Corty Fengler
Sonia Gariaeff*
Amy L. Hespenheide
Emily (Yixuan) Huang
Gretchen Klein
Donna Kulkarni
Margaret (Peg) Lisi*
Brielle Marina Neilson*
Kimberly J. Orbik
Linda J. Randall
Meredith Riekse
Celeste Riepe
Jeanne Schoch
Sandy Sellin
Dr. Meghan Spyker*
Kyle S. Tingzon*#
Makiko Ueda
Merilyn Telle Vaughn*
Heidi L. Waterman*
Hannah J. Wolf

TENORS
Paul Angelo
Alexander P. Bonner
Todd Bradley
Scott Dickerman
Thomas L. Ellison
Elliott JG Encarnación*#
Sam Faustine*
Ron Gallman
Kevin Gibbs*
Edward Im
Alec Jeong
James Lee
Benjamin S. Lorenzoni
John Mansfield*
Ryan S. Peterson
David Kurtenbach Rivera*
Darita Seth*
Tetsuya Taura
Troy Turriate*
Jack Wilkins*
Weichen Winston Yin
John Paul Young

BASSES
Sean Brooks
Phil Buonadonna
Robert Calvert
Sean Casey
Adam Cole*
Noam Cook
James Radcliffe Cowing III
Rick Galbreath
Rob Lloyd Huber
Joshua Hughes*
Roderick Lowe
Tim Marson
Richard Mix*
James Monios*
Clayton Moser*
Chengrui Pan
Jess Green Perry
Matthew C. Peterson*
Michael Prichard
Mark E. Rubin
Storm K. Staley
Connor Tench
David Varnum*
Goangshiuan Shawn Ying

Jenny Wong,
Chorus Director
John Wilson,
Rehearsal Accompanist

**Member of the American Guild of Musical Artists*
#Soloist (Getty Pieces)

FRIENDS OF THE CHORUS

The San Francisco Symphony gratefully acknowledges the following donors who have made a recent contribution of $100 or more to the San Francisco Symphony Chorus through March 28, 2025.

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Ms. Naheed Attari
Bruce Beron & Diane Wexler
Arlene Boyd
Seth Brenzel & Malcolm Gaines
Mr. Michael Coleman
Ms. Wendy Cook
David^ & Maggie Cooke♪
Carol Copperud
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Tricia Swift
Tom & Rosemary Tisch
Dan & Lauren Wilkins
Ms. Arden Wong
Mr. Goangshiuan Shawn Ying
Anonymous (2)

♪Pierre Monteux Society member

^Deceased

BLACKSTAR SYMPHONY
THE CONCERT

Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 7:30pm
Friday, June 27, 2025, at 7:30pm

Vince Mendoza conducting
Donny McCaslin artistic director
San Francisco Symphony



THE MUSIC OF DAVID BOWIE

Donny McCaslin, *Artistic Director*

Jules Buckley • Tim Davies • Michael R. Dudley Jr. • Vince Mendoza • Maria Schneider • Jamshied Sharifi • Tony Visconti, *Orchestrators*

Donny McCaslin & Jules Buckley, *Co-Music Directors*

Donny McCaslin saxophone
Zach Danziger percussion
Jason Lindner keyboard
Jonathan Maron bass

Gail Ann Dorsey vocalist
David Poe vocalist

John Cameron Mitchell guest artist

Ryan O'Gara, *Lighting Designer*
Samantha Weiser, *Associate Lighting Designer*
Troy Choi, *Sound Designer/Front of House Mixer*
Preston Dunnavant, *Monitor Engineer*
Brian Orr, *Production Coordinator*

Ruth and Stephen Hendel, *Executive Producers*
Steven Saporta, *Producer*
Margaret Selby, *Producer and Booking Agent*

This program is performed without intermission.

Song List

"Blackstar" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Vince Mendoza

"Tis a Pity She Was a Whore" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Michael R. Dudley Jr.

"Lazarus" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Jules Buckley

"Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Maria Schneider

"Girl Loves Me" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Jamshied Sharifi

"Dollar Days" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Tony Visconti

"I Can't Give Everything Away" (from *Blackstar* Album, 2016)
Orch. Jamshied Sharifi

"Life on Mars?" (from *Hunky Dory*, 1971)
Orch. Tim Davies

"Where Are We Now?" (from *The Next Day*, 2013)
Orch. Jamshied Sharifi

"Space Oddity" (from *Space Oddity* Album 1969)
Orch. Jules Buckley

"Heroes" (from *Heroes* Album, 1977)
Orch. Jules Buckley

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"Tis a Pity," Published by: Nipple Music (BMI),
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"Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)," Published by: Nipple Music (BMI)
All rights administered by Warner Tamerlane Publishing Corp,
"Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)" embodies portions of the song "Brand New Heavy," written by Paul Batemen and Narvinder Bhamra and published by Flex Publishing, administered in the United States of America by Music Sales Corporation (ASCAP).
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"Life on Mars?," Published by: BMG Rights Management Limited (UK) (PRS), EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS) c/o Tintoretto Music, EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS) c/o Screen Gems – EMI Music Inc.

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"Modern Love," Written by David Bowie, Published by Jones Music America (ASCAP) administered by ARZO Publishing

"Heroes," Published BMG Songs Limited (PRS), Universal Music - MGB Ltd (PRS), Screen Gems – EMI Music Inc. (BMI), EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS), Tintoretto Music (BMI)

"Space Oddity," Written by David Bowie,
Published by: Onward Music Ltd.

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I initially met David Bowie in 2014 on the recommendation of my longtime friend and collaborator, Maria Schneider. While Maria was collaborating with David on "Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)" she played him my album *Casting for Gravity*, which set the following events into motion.

That summer I played a gig with my band at the 55 Bar—a former speakeasy in the West Village with a long history of presenting cutting edge, improvised music. David showed up for the first set. Five months later, I was at the Magic Shop recording studio in New York City, recording *Blackstar*.

In the studio, David was unfailingly present and focused. He arrived punctually every morning and told us from the beginning that nothing would be off limits. While he gave us strong tunes with his unique perspective, we had complete freedom to play with what he gave us. This is the dream of every musician—to exist in an intentional, thoughtful, and playful environment.

Months later, I sat alone in David's office, listening to the finished record for the first time, with tears in my eyes and a smile on my face. . . and then he was there, smiling, too. He, who'd lived with this music for months and through many iterations, was just as happy with how it turned out.

I was overwhelmed by the music, by the experience, by the relationship I had formed with David.

The idea to conceptualize *Blackstar* with orchestra came about when I was invited by the conductor and arranger Jules Buckley to perform with the Metropole Orkest in Holland. The program consisted mostly of original music from my album *Blow* along with two Bowie tunes—"Look Back in Anger" and "Warszawa."

One night over dinner, as Jules and I reflected on how great "Warszawa" sounded with a full studio orchestra, we wondered what would, or could, *Blackstar* sound like presented on this scale. Until that point, I had been hesitant to revisit the music that inhabited such a sacred, emotional place for me.

Yet the idea of expanding Blackstar and seeing where we could take it compelled me. The record became a point of departure for our imaginations.

Tonight, you will hear Blackstar in its entirety, along with additional songs connected in my imagination. It is a reimagining of David's work on a large scale with some of the best orchestrators and arrangers on the planet: Jules Buckley, Tim Davies, Vince Mendoza, Maria Schneider, Jamshied Sharifi, Tony Visconti, Michael Dudley Jr., and Vellu Halkosalmi. I have included a few preludes and segues as meditations on the emotional valence of *Blackstar*, as well as to transition through the composition changes in the program.

The making of Blackstar changed me, as a person and as a musician. Creative possibilities that once seemed remote suddenly feel possible, and the journey to follow what feels authentic and meaningful leads me to unexpected places now more than ever. David said to me, "you know you're on to something creative when you feel uncomfortable," and I'm happy to report that I've been uncomfortable quite often these last few years, following the unclear path, and embracing the unexpected.

I love this music, and it is close to my heart. David was a remarkable human being; generous, humble, and very, very funny.

David refused to stay in one musical "lane" during his long career, playing with different musical styles and creating a musical language all his own. That principle is at work in this program in ways that are obvious and ways that are less so. I hope you enjoy the show!

—Donny McCaslin



Donny McCaslin with David Bowie

FROM THE PRODUCER

Blackstar Symphony is a unique and singular interpretation of the music of *Blackstar*, a recording that Bowie fashioned as his finale. Different in feel and different in sound, Bowie's *Blackstar* speaks more poignantly—and more metaphorically—than any of the artist's prior creations. It stands as a monumental testament to artistic expression on the eve of the artist's passing from this life. David Bowie died two days after the album's release.

It is our intention to assemble a presentation that matched the profound nature of Bowie's original endeavor. We recruited the foremost orchestrators/arrangers to reimagine Bowie's final masterpiece for full symphonic orchestra to be accompanied by Donny McCaslin's jazz quartet and two featured vocalists. The scope of the production demanded no less.

McCaslin, the saxophonist that Bowie himself originally recruited as *Blackstar*'s bandleader, is this show's artistic director. He, along with Jules Buckley, put a magnifying glass to all the elements—the melodies, the song structures, the performers and their performances, all geared towards once again delivering Bowie's heartfelt final message—one which is not conveyed in words but rather in the artful and visionary construct itself.

The show begins with a presentation of *Blackstar* in its entirety. That will be followed by various selections from the artist's extensive catalog, each also receiving the probing examination that is the guiding principle of this production. Featured are such touchstone Bowie compositions as "Heroes," "Life On Mars?," "Space Oddity," and others that serve as a reminder of the pervasiveness of Bowie's presence in the popular culture. All the material presented is with the kind permission and unflinching support of the David Bowie Estate, to which a debt of gratitude is owed.

—Steven Saporta

About the Artists



DONNY MCCASLIN

Donny McCaslin (artistic director and co-music director) is best known as the saxophonist on David Bowie's last album, *Blackstar*. The composer and bandleader has released a dozen albums over his genre-defying, Grammy-nominated career. He began playing at age 12, and as a teenager, performed in his vibraphonist father's band in Santa Cruz. By high school, he had appeared multiple times at the Monterey Jazz Festival. After attending Berklee College of Music on a full scholarship, McCaslin became a sought-after player in New York. David Bowie saw McCaslin perform as a soloist with the Maria Schneider Orchestra and brought in his progressive jazz quartet, which came to define *Blackstar*'s visionary stylistic fusion. As David Hadju wrote in *The Nation*, "Donny McCaslin was David Bowie's David Bowie." In turn, Bowie influenced McCaslin, who fused alt-rock and jazz on his first album with lyrics, 2018's *BLOW*.



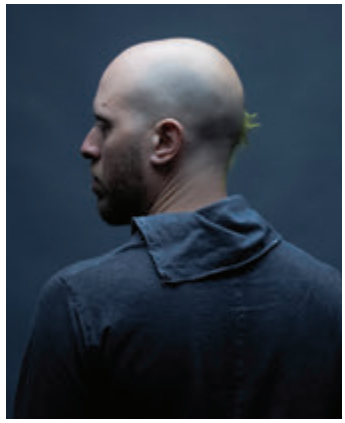
VINCE MENDOZA

Vince Mendoza (conductor and orchestrator) has been at the forefront of the contemporary music scene for the last 30 years, writing scores of compositions and arrangements for big band, chamber, and symphonic settings. His credits read like a "who's who" of the best modern instrumentalists and singers in the world today. He has six Grammy awards and 34 nominations. Mendoza is the composer in residence with the West German Radio Orchestra in Köln and conductor laureate of the Netherlands Metropole Orchestra. Mendoza's new recording, *Freedom Over Everything*, features his compositions with Antonio Sanchez, Julia Bullock, MC Black Thought, and the Czech National Symphony.



ZACH DANZIGER

Zach Danziger (percussion) is on the cutting edge of music and technology, leading a movement that has broad implications for modern drum set playing. Emerging from New York, Danziger's musical expertise led him to work with a wide range of artists including Primal Scream, Busta Rhymes, Michel Camilo, Wayne Krantz, Donny McCaslin, David Holmes, LeBron James, Mary J. Blige, Rod Stewart, Jack Black, Mariah Carey, Luke Vibert, Sinéad O'Connor, Chaka Khan, and Miley Cyrus. He has composed and played on countless major motion picture soundtracks. Danziger is involved with several original electronic projects. Mister Barrington, which features former Roots bassist Owen Biddle and keyboardist Oli Rockberger, has garnered radio airplay worldwide—including BBC and NPR features. His innovative use of music technology has also been recognized in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Downbeat*, and *Electronic Musician*, as well as a TEDx talk entitled "Innovative Thinking," which spawned the interactive audio visual projects Edit Bunker, NIne FIfteen O'Clock, and Wednesday Night Titans.



JASON LINDNER

Jason Lindner (keyboard and synthesizer), aka *flymyspcshp*, is a contemporary electronic musician and keyboardist from Brooklyn, widely known for his post-jazz, IDM-influenced group, Now Vs Now, and for his unique keyboard and synth work on David Bowie's *Blackstar.* With an artistic identity spanning genres, cultures, formats, and technologies, Lindner is a frequent performer and collaborator in the underground experimental electronic and DJ communities, actively exploring cross sections of live electronic music and spontaneous improvisation for immersive sonic journeys both on and off the dance floor. He plays everything from raves to meditative wellness sessions, both as a solo artist and in collaboration with a growing list of luminaries including Currency Audio, Yuka Honda (Cibo Matto), Mulatu Astatke, Saha Gnawa, Nikki Nair, Toribio, JKriv, Greg Paulus (No Regular Play), Salami Rose Joe Louis, LNDFK, Tatyana, Kimbra (Exo-Tech), Nu Jazz, No Eyes, Hybrid Movement Company, Sidra Bell, Poncili Creacion, Lauryn Hill, Meshell Ndegeocello, Angelique Kidjo, and Danny Elfman.



JONATHAN MARON

Jonathan Maron (bass) is a Grammy-nominated electric bassist, composer, and producer. His unique approach, propulsive bass lines, and big sound travel with him always, regardless of the musical setting. Early in his career, Maron co-founded New York's Groove Collective, a band that has toured internationally, released eight albums including their Grammy-nominated, *People People Music Music*. The band's dance-floor blend of Afro-Cuban rhythms, jazz, funk, and house music has provided a perfect showcase for Maron's playing and writing. With other artists, Jonathan can be heard on more than 200 records ranging widely in style, including Maxwell's platinum selling "Ascenscion (Don't Ever Wonder)." Maron has also performed with Meshell Ndegeocello, Mike Doughty, Tupac Shakur, Shujaat Khan, Dave Douglas, Jewel, India. Arie, and Kurt Rosenwinkel, among many others. In 2021, Maron released his own record, *Wide Open Lazy Eye*, and regularly performs as a leader.



JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL

John Cameron Mitchell (vocalist and guest artist) co-created the rock musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, for which he won two Tony Awards, Best Director at Sundance, a Golden Globe nomination, and a review from David Bowie: "John, you got it right." He directed the films *Shortbus* (2006), *Rabbit Hole* (2010, Oscar nomination for Nicole Kidman), and Neil Gaiman's *How to Talk to Girls at Parties* (2017). On TV, he's appeared in *Girls*, *Shrill*, *The Good Fight*, Netflix's *The Sandman*, Apple TV+'s *City on Fire*, and as *Tiger King*'s Joe Exotic in Peacock Channel's *Joe vs. Carole*. His musical podcast series, *Anthem: Homunculus*, stars Glenn Close, Cynthia Erivo, Patti LuPone, and Laurie Anderson, and he's released a solo album called *New American Dream Pts.1&2*. He's presently touring a new concert with Amber Martin, as well as developing a scripted podcast series, *Cancellation Island*, and a musical TV series with Linda Perry called *The Disciples*.



GAIL ANN DORSEY

Gail Ann Dorsey (vocalist) is known as one of David Bowie's longest-serving bandmates, as a bassist and vocalist, recording and touring the world many times over from 1995 to his untimely death in 2016. She sang lead vocals live on the showstopper "Under Pressure," taking the part originally recorded by Freddie Mercury. She has toured and recorded with countless acts including Tears for Fears, Lenny Kravitz, and Bryan Ferry, and served as bandleader for Gwen Stefani. Recently, she was a featured vocalist on albums by the National and Matt Berninger, and has released three solo albums: *The Corporate World*, *Rude Blue*, and *I Used To Be….*



DAVID POE

The songs of David Poe (vocalist) have been featured in TV and film projects like *Nashville* and *Dexter*, performed by a diverse array of artists, and recorded by producers T Bone Burnett, Larry Klein, and Buddy Miller. Poe has written and performed songs and scores for American Repertory Theater, the LA Dance Project, Rambert Dance, the Malala Fund, Harvard Dance, and Shadowland by Pilobolus. He has produced recordings for other artists including Regina Spektor, Brendan Hines, and Kraig Jarret Johnson. He is a composer fellow of the Sundance Institute.

TROY CHOI

Based in Southern California, Troy Choi (sound designer and front-of-house mixer) has been the audio engineer for *La La Land in Concert*, *Love Actually in Concert*, and *Revolution: The Music of The Beatles–A Symphonic Experience*. He has also worked with Herbie Hancock and Danny Elfman.

PRESTON DUNNAVANT

Preston Dunnavant (monitor engineer) is a live sound audio engineer and music producer from South Carolina. He has held the role of festival audio engineer at Spoleto Festival USA for the past three years, and spends the off season collaborating with an array of musicians, artists, and local Charleston venues. An alumnus of Clemson University, Dunnavant made his debut in sound design with *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*.

RYAN O'GARA

Ryan O'Gara (lighting designer) has designed for *Thoughts of a Colored Man* on Broadway and US tours of *The Wiz*, *On Your Feet*, *A Night with Janis Joplin*, *Blippi*, *Vocalocity*, *The Walking Dead Experience*, and *The Little Prince*. He has designed for Cirque du Soleil in Germany, numerous other credits in New York, and in dance for American Ballet Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, MOMIX, gloATL, and Ballet Hispanico.

JULES BUCKLEY

Grammy-winning composer, arranger, and conductor Jules Buckley (orchestrator) has collaborated on a staggering discography of more than 70 albums. He has curated live and recording projects reimagining styles from jazz, disco, and soul to electronica, global, and avant-garde for orchestra, with Quincy Jones, Snarky Puppy, Michael Kiwanuka, Jacob Collier, Bokanté, Lianne La Havas, Massive Attack. and many more. He is cofounder and conductor of the Heritage Orchestra, honorary conductor of the Metropole Orchestra (following his tenure as chief conductor), and chief artist in association with the BBC Symphony.

TIM DAVIES

Tim Davies (orchestrator) is a Grammy-nominated and Annie-winning composer, arranger, orchestrator, and conductor. He is a respected lead orchestrator and regular conductor in studios from Los Angeles to London. His credits for film and television include *La La Land*, *Free Guy*, and *Frozen*, two *Ant-Man* movies, and many others. He also recently conducted his own award-winning score to *Maya and the Three*.

MICHAEL R. DUDLEY JR.

Michael R. Dudley Jr. (orchestrator) is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, and orchestrator based in Upstate New York. Since earning a degree in commercial music production at the University of Cincinnati, Michael has participated in many ensembles and concert series. These include multiple Grammy Award–winning bands, such as the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Christian McBride Big Band, Brian Lynch Big Band, and the John Daversa Big Band, with which he recorded on the multi-Grammy Award–winning album *American Dreamers: Voices of Hope, Music of Freedom*. He has shared the stage with John Williams, Quincy Jones, Maria Schneider, Take 6, Steve Miller, and many other notable artists across the music world. He is a recent graduate of the University of Miami Frost School of Music and now is assistant professor of jazz studies at SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music.

MARIA SCHNEIDER

Maria Schneider (orchestrator) has received 14 Grammy nominations and seven Grammy Awards in jazz, classical, and for her work with David Bowie. Her honors also include numerous awards from the Jazz Journalists Association, *Downbeat* and *JazzTimes*, ASCAP's Concert Music Award, the NEA Jazz Master, and election into the 2020 American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her album *Concert in the Garden* received the honor of being inducted into the 2019 National Recording Registry.

JAMSHIED SHARIFI

Jamshied Sharifi (orchestrator) is a New York-based composer, producer, and keyboardist. He has composed the scores for the feature films *Harriet the Spy*, *Down to Earth*, *Clockstoppers*, and *Muppets From Space*, as well as contributing music to numerous other films and television shows. As a producer, arranger, and keyboardist, he has recorded and performed with Paula Cole, Ray Charles, Dream Theater, Laurie Anderson, Hassan Hakmoun, Snatam Kaur, and many others, and has written orchestrations for the Broadway shows *The Last Ship* and *The Band's Visit* (for which he won a Tony Award in 2018).

TONY VISCONTI

Three-time Grammy winner Tony Visconti (orchestrator) was born in Brooklyn and moved to London in 1967 to begin a career that led to him becoming one of the most important music producers in history. Since Bowie released his eponymous album *David Bowie*, produced by Visconti in 1969, Visconti has been a vital part of Bowie's career including his final album, *Blackstar*, winning two Grammy Awards and Album of the Year at the Brit Awards. Visconti also produced iconic music by T. Rex, Morrissey, Sparks, the Moody Blues, Thin Lizzy, The Good, The Bad & The Queen, and many others.

RUTH & STEPHEN HENDEL

Ruth & Stephen Hendel (executive producers) conceived and produced the musical *Fela!*, which ran on Broadway, at London's Royal National Theatre, and on tour all over the world. Ruth has been involved as a coproducer in many Tony Award–winning Broadway shows. Stephen is the executive producer of Alex Gibney's documentary *Finding Fela* (2014), and Ruth and Steve are executive producers of Saul Williams's film *Neptune Frost* (2022). Last spring, the Hendels presented *A Walk on the Moon* at George Street Playhouse. Additional upcoming productions include *Monsoon Wedding* and *The Devil's Arithmetic*.

STEVEN SAPORTA

Perhaps the phrase "talent catalyst" best sums up the role that Steven Saporta (producer) has played over his rich and diverse career. As such, *Blackstar* Symphony represents a kind of crowning achievement of his decades-long journey as manager, creative confidant, entrepreneur, producer, music business innovator, and consultant. Nurtured in the New York art underground, Saporta's career has been guided from the outset by a sensibility that has always compelled him to seek out, develop, and present the kind of new and alternative art and artists that resonate far beyond their emergence. He was one of the earliest pioneers of the transformative role that video would play in promoting music, serving as executive producer of four major concert television specials and countless groundbreaking clips that succeeded in launching or reinventing the careers of Whitney Houston, Van Morrison, Rod Stewart, Run-DMC, Aerosmith, Billy Joel, Sting, and the Highwaymen, which brought together country music icons Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, Kris Kristofferson, and Waylon Jennings. For more than 30 years, the company that he founded with Peter Casperson, Invasion Group Ltd, has exemplified the spirit and cutting edge of the indie music movement, becoming home to legendary rebels and maverick visionaries like producer Bill Laswell and artist Ani DiFranco. Among them is saxophonist Donny McCaslin, recruited by Bowie to play a critical role as bandleader of Blackstar, who serves as this show's artistic director. Saporta has always recognized Bowie's bold envelope-pushing creativity as the aesthetic template for his own career—as the foundation for his belief that a progressive consciousness about art also translates into the best kind of business in the long run. As he puts it. "I can't think of a better example of that sensibility than *Blackstar* Symphony."

MARGARET SELBY

Margaret Selby (producer and booking agent) is the founder and President of Selby Artists Management and Selby Creative Productions. With a critical eye for recognizing exceptional talent, Selby's many accomplishments include producing the first Off-Broadway hip-hop musical, *Jam on the Groove with the Rock Steady Crew*, which earned a Drama Desk Award nomination and toured internationally. She toured the Tony Award–winning Broadway production *of Fela!* across the United States and to London's Sadler's Wells, and The Holland Festival. A special concert version of *Fela!* was featured in the Adelaide Festival, Auckland Festival, Kennedy Center, Central Park, Saratoga Performing Arts, and House of Blues Boston. The production continues to tour today. For more than 15 years she has been touring the Tony Award–winning production *Slava's Snowshow* throughout North and South America. Most recently, she produced *Blackstar* Symphony, David Bowie's final album reimagined for orchestra, and the highly acclaimed Olivier Award–nominated *Turn It Out With Tiler Peck & Friends* in London and the United States.

Selby has worked with luminaries of the dance world such as Twyla Tharp, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Mark Morris, and Suzanne Farrell. Her current roster is comprised today's most in demand and important artists including Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Ballets Jazz Montréal's *DANCE ME The Music of Leonard Cohen*, BODYTRAFFIC, Camille A. Brown & Dancers, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, DIAVOLO, Compagnie Hervé Koubi, Miami City Ballet, MOMIX, Parsons Dance, Sergio Bernal Dance Company, and *Turn It Out With Tiler Peck & Friends*. Her extensive experience supporting performances and touring throughout the world makes her a valued partner for artists and presenters alike.

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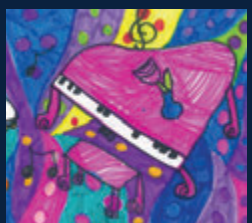
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Together, we can create the orchestra of the future.





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The San Francisco War Memorial acknowledges that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

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MEET THE MUSICIANS

Matthew Griffith

Associate Principal and E-flat Clarinet

Matthew Griffith joined the San Francisco Symphony as Associate Principal and E-flat Clarinet in 2022. He previously served as acting assistant principal clarinet with the North Carolina Symphony and the Nashville Symphony, and was a member of TŌN (The Orchestra Now), a graduate-level training orchestra based at Bard College. A native of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, he holds degrees from Yale University and New England Conservatory, and was a Tanglewood Music Center Fellow.


Kristen Loken

Do you remember the first concert you played with the San Francisco Symphony?
The first full concert I played was *Star Wars: Episode IV*, which was also the first time I'd done a movie with a big screen in a professional orchestra. There's a lot of pressure playing in a new hall, so it was nice that it was a little bit more of an informal setting, as well as such an exciting feature in the first week of the season.

How did you begin playing clarinet?
I started with a plastic toy recorder. My parents bought me one when I was really young, and after school I would try to play my favorite melodies from video games and TV shows. I think that naturally led to clarinet in fifth grade.

Did you have some especially influential teachers?
My first teacher was Dr. Jill Hanes in the Sheboygan area. She got me going and was part of the reason I stuck to it through middle and high school. To this day she is very supportive. Later I also studied with Todd Levy, who is the principal clarinet of the Milwaukee Symphony, and he transformed my sound to the next level and introduced me to this whole world of professional orchestras and auditions. My most recent teacher was Michael Wayne. He was wonderful about bringing me back to the basics and guiding me all the way into the most advanced stages of my career. I am incredibly grateful that I was able to have such amazing mentorship.

You play E-flat clarinet, which is the small, soprano member of the family. Did you intend to specialize in it?
I've had to play a lot of bass clarinet and E-flat over the years in school and beyond, but when it comes to auxiliary instruments, I think I always had a little more of an affinity for E-flat—I enjoy playing it, and over time that has made me a specialist.

Which pieces use E-flat clarinet?
The E-flat and D clarinets gained traction in the 19th century, starting with Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, and ever since they have been used in many of the major works that everyone recognizes. One of the first pieces I played in San Francisco that showcased this type of clarinet was Stravinsky's *The Firebird*. The instrument's also commonly found in Mahler, Shostakovich, Richard Strauss, Bartók, Ravel. . . a lot of pieces we did in my first season here.

I understand you're also a computer programmer.
That's right! I started getting into computers growing up, because my brother would find cool software to install, like RPG Maker for making role-playing games. I didn't quite realize I was falling into computer programming from these applications, but eventually I was learning C++ and winning national competitions. I did a double major in college with music and computer science.

Was there a moment when you had to decide on clarinet over programming?
I've always wanted to do both to the fullest extent that I can. The window of opportunity for a career in classical music is generally much smaller, so I've had to put more time and focus on that to find the right balance. But I still keep going with programming—I make video games with a team of people online, and my daily routine and practicing methods are largely run by computer programs I've made.

INFORMATION

WHILE YOU ARE HERE

Please silence and store all electronic devices during the concert.
No outside food in the hall.

Late Arrivals and Re-Entry:
All SF Symphony concerts start promptly. Ushers will seat latecomers at the earliest possible seating break. Patrons who exit seating during a performance will be reseated at an appropriate interval. If you exit the hall at intermission or at any time during the performance, please have your ticket with you for re-entry.
Elevators: Grove St and Van Ness Ave lobbies for access to Orchestra, First and Second Tiers; Loge elevator at Loge entrance, Orchestra level center.
Restrooms: Street level: adjacent to Box Office, men's and women's; First and Second Tier: women's at Orchestra Left/Van Ness side, men's at Orchestra Right/Grove side; Loge corridor: women's at Grove side, men's at Van Ness side. All-gender restrooms are located at street level on the Orchestra Left/Van Ness side.
Drinking Fountains: On Orchestra level near elevators, on other levels in inner corridors and near restrooms.
Coat check: Available at Box Office entrance. Oversized items larger than approximately 14"x14"x6" are not allowed inside the hall.

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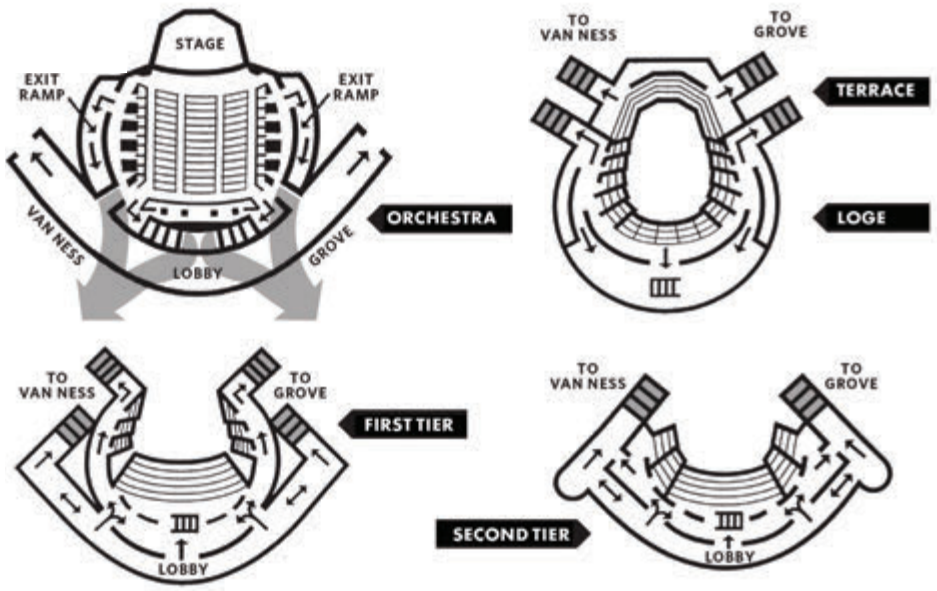
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