



**SAN FRANCISCO
SYMPHONY**
MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

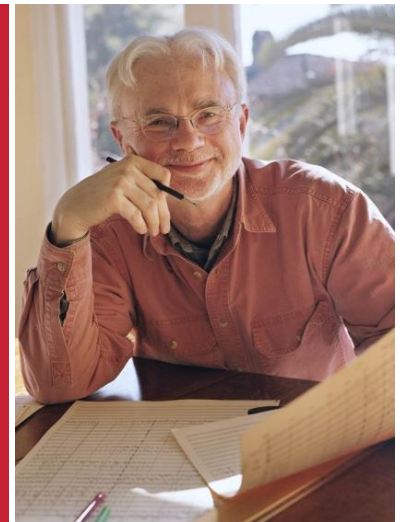
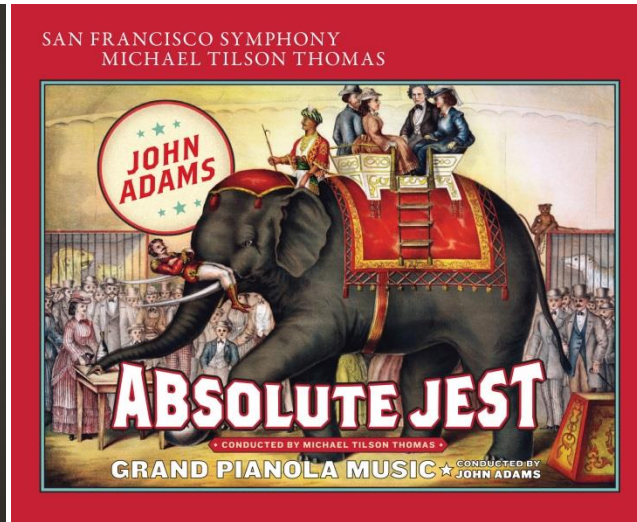


Press Contacts:

Public Relations
San Francisco Symphony
(415) 503-5474
publicrelations@sfsymphony.org
www.sfsymphony.org/press

National Press Representation:
Shuman Associates
(212) 315-1300
shumanpr@shumanassociates.net

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(A high resolution image of the cover art is available for download from the SFS Media's [Online Press Kit](#))

**MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS & THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY RELEASE
NEW RECORDING OF JOHN ADAMS'S *ABSOLUTE JEST* AND *GRAND PIANOLA MUSIC*
ON SFS MEDIA AUGUST 14, 2015**

Pre-order on iTunes.com/SFSymphony and SFSymphony.org/Adams

SAN FRANCISCO, July 14, 2015 – Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas (MTT) and the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) will release a live recording of John Adams's *Absolute Jest* and *Grand Pianola Music*, on the Orchestra's Grammy Award-winning SFS Media Label on Friday, August 14, 2015. Composed almost three decades apart, both works were written specifically for the San Francisco Symphony by Adams, one of the Orchestra's most important artistic partners for the past 35 years. On this album, Tilson Thomas leads the Orchestra in the first available recording of the SFS commissioned *Absolute Jest*, featuring the St. Lawrence String Quartet, and, in *Grand Pianola Music*, John Adams leads the orchestra, pianists Marc-André Hamelin and Orli Shaham, and the vocal group Synergy Vocals. The release will be available as a hybrid SACD compatible with conventional CD players, and as a digital download — including as high-resolution 24-bit downloads — and on all major streaming services. On iTunes, the album's audio is Mastered for iTunes. *Absolute Jest* and *Grand Pianola Music* may be pre-ordered on iTunes at iTunes.com/SFSymphony and the SF

Symphony's e-store at sfsymphony.org/Adams starting today. A promotional video about the recording can be viewed [here](#).

John Adams's creative partnership with the San Francisco Symphony has played an important role in the Orchestra's artistic profile for over 30 years. "The San Francisco Symphony has had the tremendous good fortune of collaborating with John Adams over many decades," says MTT. "*Absolute Jest* is one of my favorite John Adams pieces and the playing of the St. Lawrence String Quartet and the Orchestra is an absolute delight." The MTT SFS recording of John Adams's *Harmonielehre* and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* won a 2012 Grammy award for Best Orchestral Performance and Germany's coveted ECHO Klassik Prize.

Adams's *Absolute Jest*, an SFS co-commission for the celebration of its Centennial Season, takes its inspiration from the scherzos of Beethoven's late string quartets. It was first premiered during MTT and the Orchestra's acclaimed 2012 *American Mavericks* Festival and they have since performed it on tour both in the U.S. and Europe, each time with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Adams writes that the work "is a colossal twenty-five-minute scherzo in which I take fragments of Beethoven's music and subject them to my own peculiar developmental techniques."

John Adams's *Grand Pianola Music*, scored for two pianos, three female voices, winds, brass & percussion, was written for the San Francisco Symphony and premiered on February 26, 1982 at the Japan Center Theatre as part of the Orchestra's Festival of New and Unusual Music. Adams conducted the Orchestra at its premiere, as he does on this recording. The work was performed again at Davies Symphony Hall in 2000 as part of the first *American Mavericks Festival*, with John Adams conducting the New World Symphony.

Notes written by Adams indicate the idea for his minimalist piece began as a "dream image in which, while driving down Interstate Route 5, I was approached from behind by two long, gleaming, black stretch limousines. As the vehicles drew up beside me they transformed into the world's longest Steinway pianos...twenty, maybe even thirty feet long. Screaming down the highway at 90 m.p.h., they gave off volleys of Bb and Eb major arpeggios. I was reminded of walking down the hallways of the San Francisco Conservatory, where I used to teach, hearing the sonic blur of twenty or more pianos playing Chopin, the Emperor Concerto, Hanon, Rachmaninoff, the *Maple Leaf* rag and much more."

MTT and the SFS perform *Absolute Jest* with the St. Lawrence String Quartet in concerts on their upcoming European Festivals Tour at the Edinburgh International Festival on August 27; at the Berlin Festival on September 4 (German premiere), in Bucharest at the George Enescu Festival September 7 (Romanian premiere) and at the Lucerne Festival on September 9 (Swiss premiere.) More information about the tour can be found in an online press kit at <http://bit.ly/SFSEuroFestivalsPressKit2015>

Absolute Jest was recorded in 96kHz/24-bit audio May 4, 5 and 9, 2013 and *Grand Pianola Music* was recorded in PCM 192kHz/24-bit audio January 16-18, 2015, both in Davies Symphony Hall.

ABOUT THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

[The San Francisco Symphony](#) is widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the US. Led by Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, the SFS presents more than 220 concerts annually, and reaches an audience of nearly 600,000 in its home of Davies Symphony Hall, through its multifaceted education and community programs, and a global audience through its media initiatives, national, and international tours.

ABOUT SFS MEDIA



SFS Media is the San Francisco Symphony's in-house label, launched in 2001. SFS Media records and releases audio and visual material reflecting the Orchestra and Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas's commitment to showcasing music by maverick composers as well as core classical masterworks. The recordings reflect the broad range of programming that has been a hallmark of the MTT/SFS partnership. Recorded live in concert and engineered at Davies Symphony Hall, the audio recordings are released on hybrid SACD and in high-resolution digital formats. SFS Media has garnered eight Grammy awards. SFS Media also produces and releases documentary and live performance videos, including the SFS's national public television series and multimedia project *Keeping Score*, which included three

seasons of television episodes, eight documentaries, and eight concert films designed to make classical music more accessible to people of all ages and musical backgrounds, available on DVD and Blu-ray. Other videos of the San Francisco Symphony available from SFS Media include *A Celebration of Leonard Bernstein: Opening Night at Carnegie Hall 2008* and *San Francisco Symphony at 100*, a documentary about the Symphony's history, which won a Northern California Emmy Award.

All SFS Media recordings are available from the Symphony Store in Davies Symphony Hall and online at sfsymphony.org/store, digitally on itunes.com/sfsymphony, and from all major retailers and other digital outlets worldwide. SFS Media recordings are distributed by harmonia mundi in the U.S., Canada, and France, through Avie Records internationally, and by The Orchard to digital retailers.

Title: *Absolute Jest, Grand Pianola Music*

Composer: John Adams (b.1947)

Artists: San Francisco Symphony
Michael Tilson Thomas Music Director
John Adams Conductor
St. Lawrence String Quartet
Marc-André Hamelin
Orli Shaham
Synergy Vocals

Recorded: *Absolute Jest* was recorded in 96kHz/24-bit audio May 4, 5 and 9, 2013 and *Grand Pianola Music* was recorded in PCM 192kHz/24-bit audio January 16-18, 2015, both in Davies Symphony Hall.

Label: SFS Media

Catalogue Number: SFS 0063

Release Date: August 14, 2015
Pre-order a digital download on iTunes at iTunes.com/SFSymphony or on disc from SFSymphony.org/Adams.

Distribution: harmonia mundi (U.S., Canada, and France)
Avie (International)
The Orchard (Digital)
Online: sfsymphony.org/store

Media copies: **Members of the press may request a copy of the recording for review from Shuman Associates at shumanpr@shumanassociates.net or the San Francisco Symphony Public Relations Department at publicrelations@sfsymphony.org**

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