

1963 he played not only in Central and South America, but in the U.S.S.R. for the first (but not last) time. In 1969, he added the Far East to his concert itinerary, and Australia in 1969.

His specialties included Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Schumann, but not at the expense of twentieth-century composers, Prokofiev and Bartók in particular. He spent considerable time in search of original versions of music, unearthing the Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1 that Nicolas Rubinstein had damned so brutally in 1875, and the 1841 Fantasie in A minor that later became the first movement of Schumann's only Piano Concerto. Frager became interested in eighteenth-century fortepianos on which he played and recorded Haydn and Mozart and wrote scholarly articles in his free time.

Despite tours, recordings, and archival pursuits, Frager never achieved parity with his elder contemporaries, even after Fleischer's right-hand injury (an extreme form of carpal tunnel syndrome, in effect, that also cost Gary Graffman the use of his right hand), and Cliburn's virtual retirement after a decade of international successes. With his curly brown hair, long neck, and ready smile, Frager seemed to lack their demonic concentration on stage (or, in Cliburn's case, an apparent other-worldly communion with "voices"). His artistry was never matter-of-fact, but neither was it charismatic, and therefore, best appreciated sight-unseen on broadcasts and recordings. His death was untimely -- from cancer, one of the music world's best-kept secrets. He played almost to the end, including a Mozart concerto in Baltimore with conductor David Zinman just weeks before his passing. To anyone, however, who had known Frager from the start of his career, he looked stricken and played mechanically -- a brave adieu, but not musically memorable (as Dinu Lipatti's had been in 1950), despite those first prizes and full schedule.



# Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2

## Michael Tilson Thomas Boston Symphony Orchestra

piano, Malcolm Frager (Live Recording)



Michael Tilson Thomas, (born December 21, 1944, Los Angeles, California, U.S.), American conductor and composer of classical music, pianist, and educator who was noted as a champion of contemporary American composers and as the founder and music director of Miami's New World Symphony and the music director of the San Francisco Symphony.

Tilson Thomas came from a line of creative family members. His paternal grandparents, Bessie and Boris Thomashefsky, were Russian immigrants and founders of the People's Theater in New York City, a major centre of Yiddish theatre (see Yiddish literature: Yiddish theatre). His father, Ted Thomas (shortened from Thomashefsky), was involved in theatre in New York as well before moving to the West Coast to pursue film and television work. Tilson Thomas's mother, Roberta, worked at Columbia Pictures. Tilson Thomas studied piano and earned a master's degree in music in 1967 from the University of Southern California. He also studied conducting in college and at age 19 was named music director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra. In 1969 he became the assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and he was later named principal guest conductor. From 1971 to 1979 Tilson Thomas served as the music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic. During that period he met composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, who became a significant mentor and friend. During the 1970s Tilson Thomas, like Bernstein before him, regularly conducted the New York Philharmonic for its Young People's Concert series.

Tilson Thomas became the principal guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1981 and held that position through 1985. He then became the principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra two years later (through 1995). In 1987 he established the New World Symphony, composed of recent graduates of the best music programs from around the world. In the 21st century the New World Symphony

served as an academy and incubator for future leaders in classical music and as a cultural and educational resource for the larger community, providing access to classical music performances as well as music lessons to school children throughout Miami.

Tilson Thomas served as the music director of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra from 1995 to 2020, when he became music director laureate. He and the symphony produced *Keeping Score* (2004–11), a PBS series of documentaries that explores the careers of notable composers and includes a performance by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Over the course of his career, Tilson Thomas became known for championing the work of living composers and performing experimental programs that drew on a diverse repertory. In 2021 he announced that he was taking a break from conducting in order to recuperate following surgery for a brain tumour.

Fragner was a younger contemporary of Leon Fleischer (b. 1928), John Browning (b. 1933), and Van Cliburn (b. 1934). Like them he became a major prizewinner, starting with the Michaels Memorial Award in Chicago, followed by the Leventritt in 1959, and a year later the Queen Elisabeth Competition at Brussels. The Michaels award caused a brief dust-up when it became known that Frager was a relative of the prize giver (whose memorialized parents had been killed in a plane crash abroad), but the Leventritt and QEC validated the voting of Chicago judges.

At the age of 14 Frager undertook six years of study in N.Y.C. with Carl Friedberg, a pupil of Clara Schumann, and during that period was privately educated. He went on to Columbia University, majoring in Russian studies and graduating in 1957. The Leventritt opened doors both in the U.S. and abroad; Frager made his first concert tour in 1959. In

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- 1 Allegro non troppo 17:21**
- 2 Allegro appassionato 8:34**
- 3 Andante 11:29**
- 4 Allegretto grazioso 9:16**

Recorded Live March 28, 1972 Venue Boston Symphony Hall  
This recording was made possible from the music archives of Clark Johnsen



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