WEBSITE REDESIGN:

\\ PROCESS JOURNAL

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR

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THE DESIGNERS

This project for the redesign of the San Francisco Symphony was a collaborative effort between team members Mark Bumanglag, Stanley Diaz, Sangyoung Jeong and Nicholas Roschkowsky.

This project was created to fulfill the requirements of the User Experience 2 class for the Web Design & New Media department at the Academy of Art University during the Fall Semester of 2011. Thank you for viewing our work and please take some time to review our portfolios.

Our thanks goes out to our instructor–Haydn Adams, the San Francisco Marketing Director–Catherine Ogden Levin, and all others who have helped us in this project.

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PROJECT BRIEF

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY BACKGROUND:

The San Francisco Symphony sets the highest possible standard for excellence in musical performance at home and around the world; Enriches, serves, and shapes cultural life throughout the spectrum of Bay Area communities; Maintains financial stability and gains public recognition as a means of ensuring its ability to fulfill its mission. The symphony serves many roles aside from it's brick and mortar location. This includes having their own label, a touring orchestra, a phenomenal core group of artists, education and community programs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The current San Francisco Symphony website must be redesigned in order to improve usability. The process of buying and ordering tickets should be simplified. Site design should appeal to new, younger, audiences without alienating current core audience. Site structure must be improved to facilitate user navigation. Lastly, the site should place precedence on the many different roles of the symphony besides its concerts.

TARGET AUDIENCES:

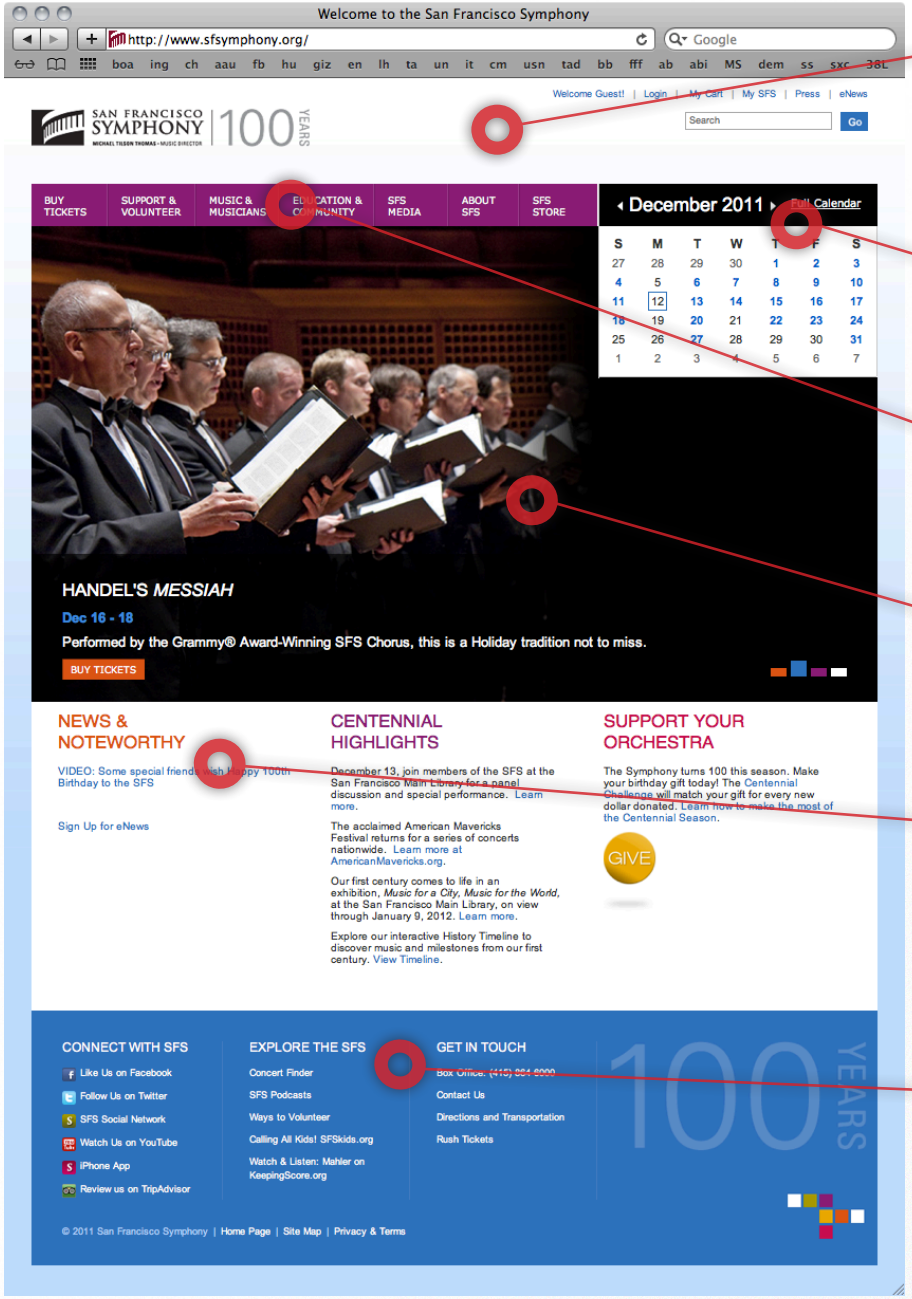
Women: Women in the household are often the primary decision makers when it comes to the arts, especially in the San Francisco Symphony.

Younger Audiences: The symphony would like to attract younger audiences to concerts. Young adults to mid-30's has been a group that the symphony has not built a large following and hopes to change that.

Symphony Newcomers: Newcomers are a major target for the symphony simply because they have yet to experience a show. Attracting newcomers is a key goal of this redesign.

Core Donors & Current Audience: Though one of the main goals of the site is to bring in fresh new faces, the site should not alienate core donors and the older generations as they make up the current core followers of the symphony.

PREVIOUS HOMEPAGE DESIGN



COLOR

Upon viewing the site, the SF Symphony's previous site design feels awkward due to a confused color palette. In combination with the gradient background, there is confusion in design and a lack of cohesiveness. Also, color disrupts the hierarchy of type and makes it difficult for the user to focus and scan through the page effectively.

MINI CALENDAR

Though it serves an important role in finding events quickly, it clashes with the slider images and creates heavy visual tension since it is also the most contrasting item on the page.

NAVIGATION

The previous site had a simple navigation that worked well, but it feels tight with the inclusion of the calendar on it's right.

SLIDER

The slider grabs the user's immediate attention. But, images feel awkward as they all cater to the calendar sitting over it.

BODY COLUMNS

These columns have a decent layout but the white space contrasts with the black of the slider and the blue of the footer, creating more visual tension on the page.

FOOTER

We felt that the large footer could be minimalised to display only necessary information such directions and contact information.

OLD SITE STRUCTURE

BUY TICKETS

Buy Concerts
- -Family-friendly Concerts
- -The American Orchestra Series
- -Chorus Concerts
- -Youth Orchestra
- -Organ Concerts
- -Sunday Matinees
- -Open Rehearsals
- -Chamber Music
- -Holiday Concerts

Concert Finder
Buy Subscriptions
Subscriber Benefits
11-12 Season Highlights
Davies After Hours
Project San Francisco
Pre- and Post-Concert Talks
Groups/Tourism Professionals
Students
Seating Charts
Plan Your Visit
- -First Timers Guide
- -The Wattis Room
- -Directions and Transportation
- -Restaurants and Hotels
- -Patrons with Disabilities
- -Lost and Found

Ticketing F.A.Q.

SUPPORT & VOLUNTEER

Annual Support
- -Friends
- -Baton Society
- -Maestro's Circle
- -Matching Gifts
- -The Wattis Room

Our Greatest Priorities
Planned Giving
- -Planned Giving Options
- -The Pierre Monteux Society
- -San Francisco Symphony Endowment
- -Charitable Gift Annuity
- -IRA Charitable Rollover

Corporate Partnership
- -Commit to Your Community
- -Strengthen Your Brand
- -Entertain Your Clients
- -Be in Good Company

Volunteer
- -Ways to Volunteer
- -Volunteer Council Leagues
  - -Contra Costa League
  - -East Bay League
  - -Junior Committee League
  - -Marin League
  - -Metropolitan League
  - -Mid-Peninsula League
  - -San Francisco League
  - -Silicon Valley League
  - -Symphonix League
  - -Upper-Penninsula League
- -Contact Us

Give Now

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

Meet the Musicians
- -Michael Tilson Thomas
- -Herbert Blomstedt
- -Donato Cabrera
- -Members Of Orchestra
- -Ragnar Bohlin
- -SFS Chorus
  - -Chorus Roster
  - -Friends of the Chorus

Program Notes
Podcasts
Featured Articles
Music Then and Now
- -Pre-1600
- -Rococco
- -Baroque
- -Classical
- -Romantic
- -Twentieth Century and Contemporary

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY

Concerts for Kids
Adventures in Music
Instrument Training and Support
Youth Orchestra
- -About the SFS Youth Orchestra
- -Music Director
- -Coaching Team
- -Current Musicians
- -Committee and Staff
- -YO Timeline
- -YO History
- -Alumni Information
- -Discography
- -Past Concerts
- -Auditions

Bass Training Program
Music for Families
Community of Music Makers
Inside Music Talks
SFSKids.com
Community Concerts

SFS MEDIA

Keeping Score
Mahler Project
- -Mahler Symphony No.1
- -Mahler Symphony No.2
- -Mahler Symphony No.3
- -Mahler Symphony No.4
- -Mahler Symphony No.5
- -Mahler Symphony No.6
- -Mahler Symphony No.7
- -Mahler Symphony No.8
- -Mahler Symphony No.9
- -Das klagende Lied
- -Das Lied von der Erde
- -Mahler Songs with Orchestra
- -Mahler Collection On Vinyl

New Releases
Radio Broadcasts - SFS on KDFC
A Celebration of Leonard Bernstein
The Composer is Dead

ABOUT SFS

Our Mission and History
The Centennial Season
SFS History Timeline
SFS Fact Sheet
Contact Us
Auditions
- -Symphony AuditionS
- -Chorus Auditions

Job Opportunities
Shop SFS
Experience the Hall
eNews
Board of Governors
Administration
Press Releases
Photo Library
Key Leadership Biographies
Press Kits

SFS STORE

OVERVIEW

In discussion with the symphony's marketing director, it was determined that there was much more to the SF Symphony site than just selling tickets. Acting as a hub for it's own recording label, international touring information, and musician training program information are just a few of the roles the site engages

STRUCTURE ISSUES

The old site has many different pages that don't house much new information. Because of this, users have had problems with finding the information they need. Our goal in restructuring the site is to make it simple and easy to understand.

NEW SITE STRUCTURE

LESS PAGES

We cut down the excess pages that were redundant and had little information. By having less pages, it saves the user from clicking and refreshing so much. This helps them focus more on content than navigating the site.

SAME INFORMATION

In combining child pages into single sub-pages, we were able to keep the same amount of information. For instance, instead of having 13 different child pages, for the Mahler project, we could put them all on one page and use interactive design elements to help the user process and sort through all the info.

COMBINING MUSICIANS + MEDIA

We chose to combine the "Musicians & Music" page with the "SFS Media" page to form "Musicians + Media". We found this would make it easier for people to find items that could have been in both sections.

EASIER TO NAVIGATE

Less pages and way points through the site make it much easier for the user to find the information they want.

LESS BANDWIDTH

Also, by cutting down on excess pages, we save bandwidth for the symphony and the user.

TICKETS + EVENTS

- Concert Tickets
- Calendar
- Subscriptions
- Season Events
- SFS On Tour
- Groups/Tourism
- Students
- Seating Charts
- Ticketing F.A.Q.

SUPPORT THE SFS

- Annual Support
- Our Greatest Priorities
- Planned Giving
- Corporate Partnership
- Volunteer
- Give Now

MUSICIANS + MEDIA

- Musicians
- Program Notes
- Podcasts + Broadcasts
- Featured Articles
- Mahler Project
- Music Through the Ages
- Keeping Score
- The Composer is Dead

EDUCATION + COMMUNITY

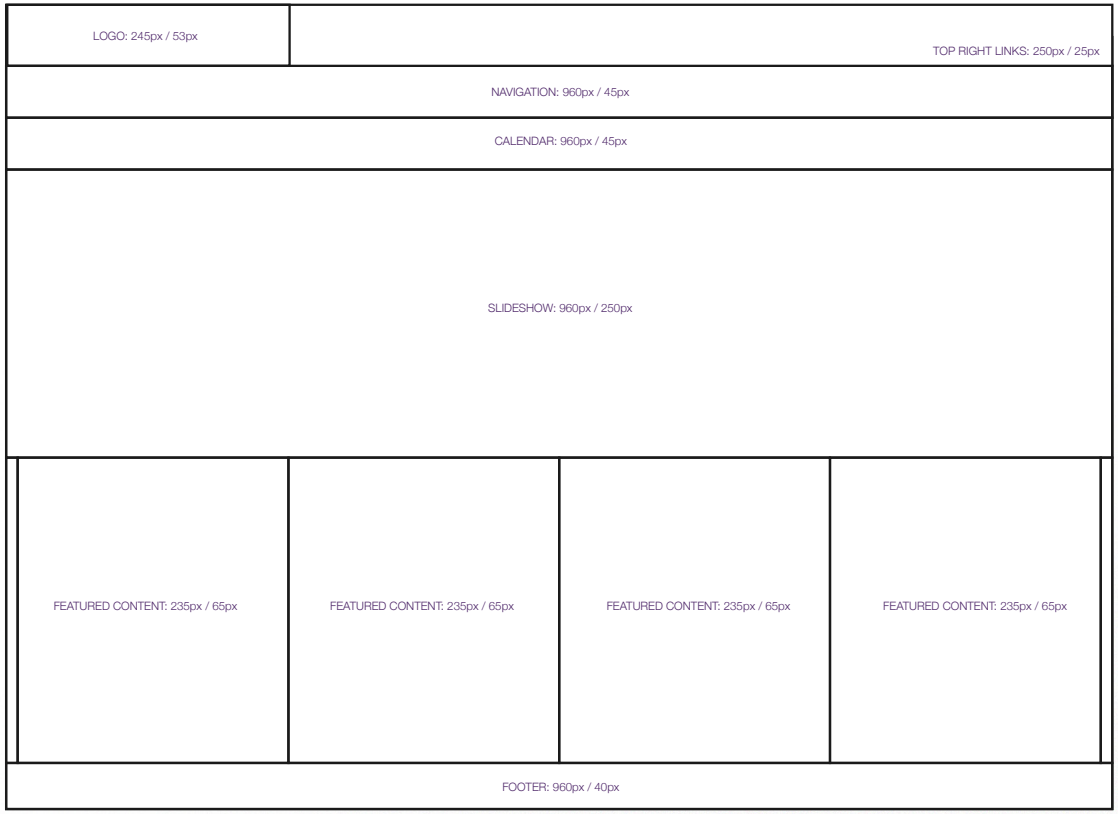
- Adventures in Music
- Instrument Training
- Youth Orchestra
- Music for Families
- Community of Music Makers
- Music Talks
- SFSKids.com

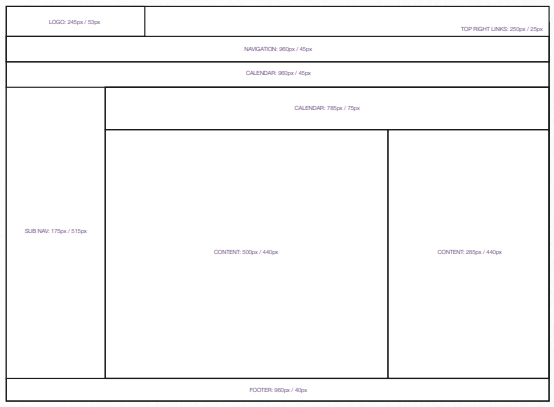
ABOUT SFS

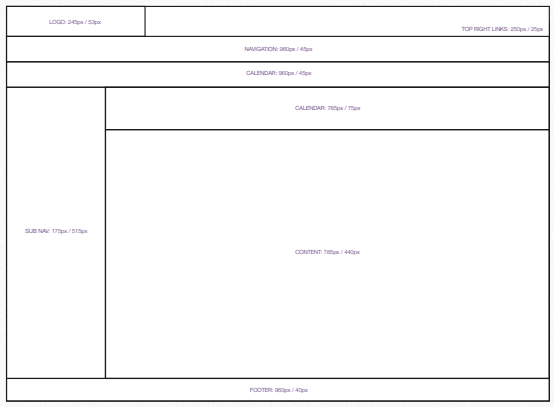
- Our Mission and History
- Contact Us
- Auditions
- Job Opportunities
- Experience the Hall
- Board of Governors
- Administration

SFS STORE

WIREFRAME DESIGNS







960PX STANDARD WIDTH

A standard width of 960px was chosen for the site becuase it accomodates the increased resolution of current monitors, and browser displays, while still keeping a size that is comfortable for smaller displays.

THREE BASIC WIREFRAMES

We developed three wireframes in total that are all based around the same headers and footers. These pages include the homepage and two formats of sub-pages with single and double column layouts.

HEADER LAYOUT

One key idea that we wanted to develop from the beginning was a horizontal mini-calendar. From a design standpoint, this would eliminate the issue of the calendar breaking the flow of the slideshow. It would also differentiate the SF Symphony's site from other symphony sites that have traditional calendars.

EXPECTED CAPACITY

In general, the wireframes were developed to be able to contain as much data that can be thrown at it. We looked at many sites and decided that a two-column content section would work best for most of the information that we needed to present. The single section sub-page would act as a "catch-all" for pages that need a custom design such as the store-front page.

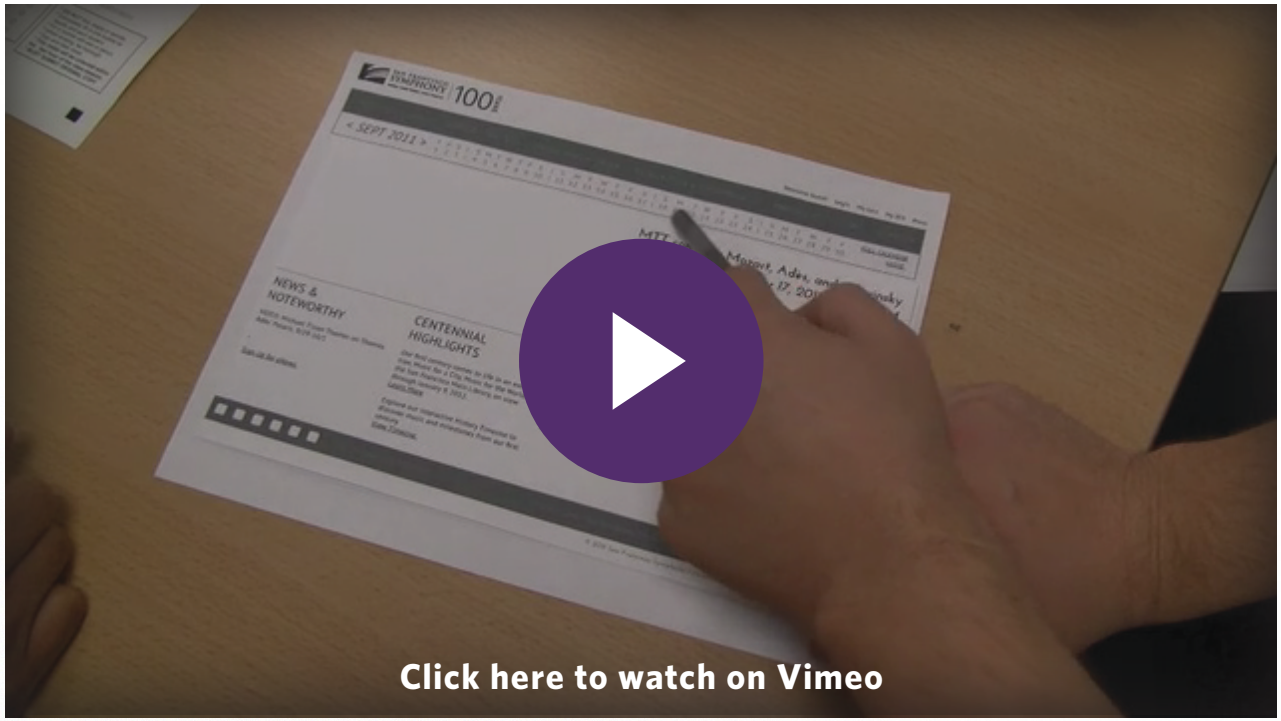
PAPER PROTOTYPING

TICKETING PROCESS

The San Francisco Symphony's ticketing and checkout process is one of the most critical aspects of the site for consumers. In order to work on the functionality aspect of our redesign, we created a paper prototype of the site in order to simulate the ticketing and checkout process. The video to the left shows the site as we worked through this process.

RESULTS

In conducting this paper prototype, we found a few flaws in the initial design that helped us make improvements and adjustments to the site accordingly. These refinements would help make the user experience feel refined and simpler.

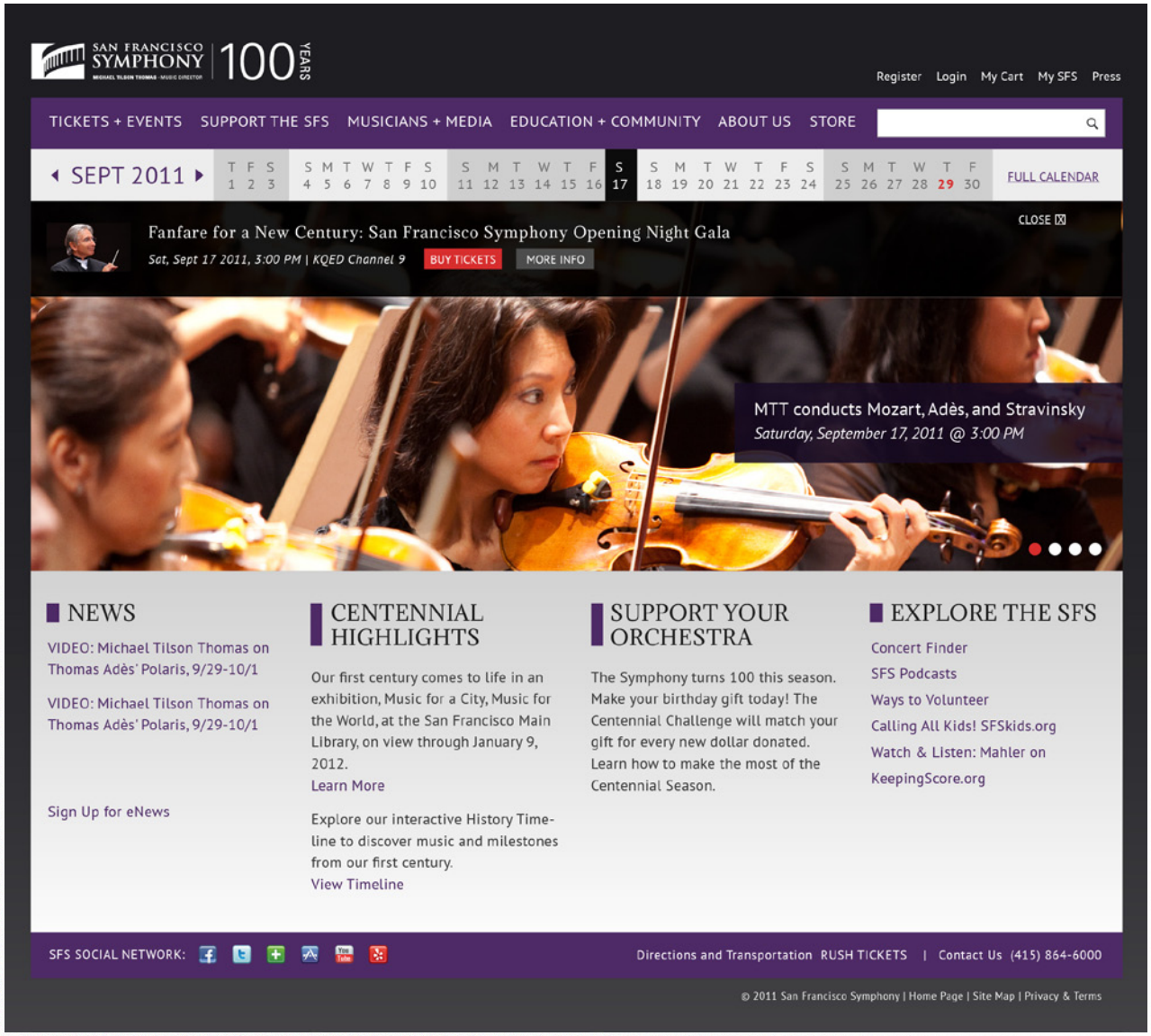


INITAL MOCK-UP DESIGN

Our initial design as seen to the left, shows a site that is structured based on the wireframes we created. We wanted the new site to have a modern and upscale feel. But at the same time, we did not want to alienate the symphony's older audience or the detract newcomers from the site by making it feel overbearing. Color and type treatment help address these issues by making the site approachable and easy to understand.

This design also shows how content is being populated into our layout. It shows the development of our horizontal calendar as well as our initial ideas for the popout calendar.

Though our final design is similar to this initial design, we would develop this into a much more polished version down the line.



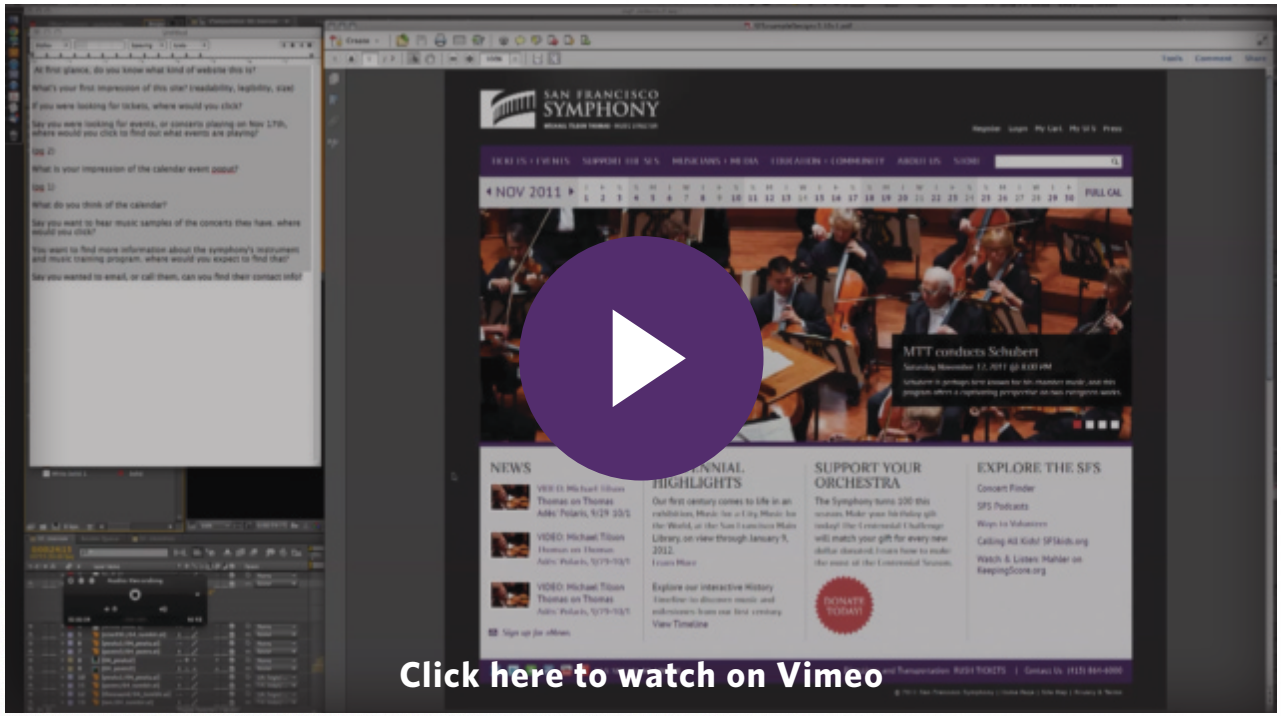
USABILITY TESTING: STAGE 1

TESTING

Once we finalized the home page design, we conducted several usability tests to check if users understood how to navigate the website to find specific information such as concert tickets for a particular day. We focused our testing on the home page calendar because it was one of the most significant changes to the website.

RESULTS

Overall, testing was a success for the overall look and design of the site. Because we only used a mockup for our first usability test, we found that some people got confused as to what days on the mini-calendar had events as well as it's overall design. We were confident that, once brought into code, we could make the mini calendar interactive and use multiple hover states to emphasize it's features and use. The usability test also helped us affirm many choices in design when they were viewed as successes or easily understood.



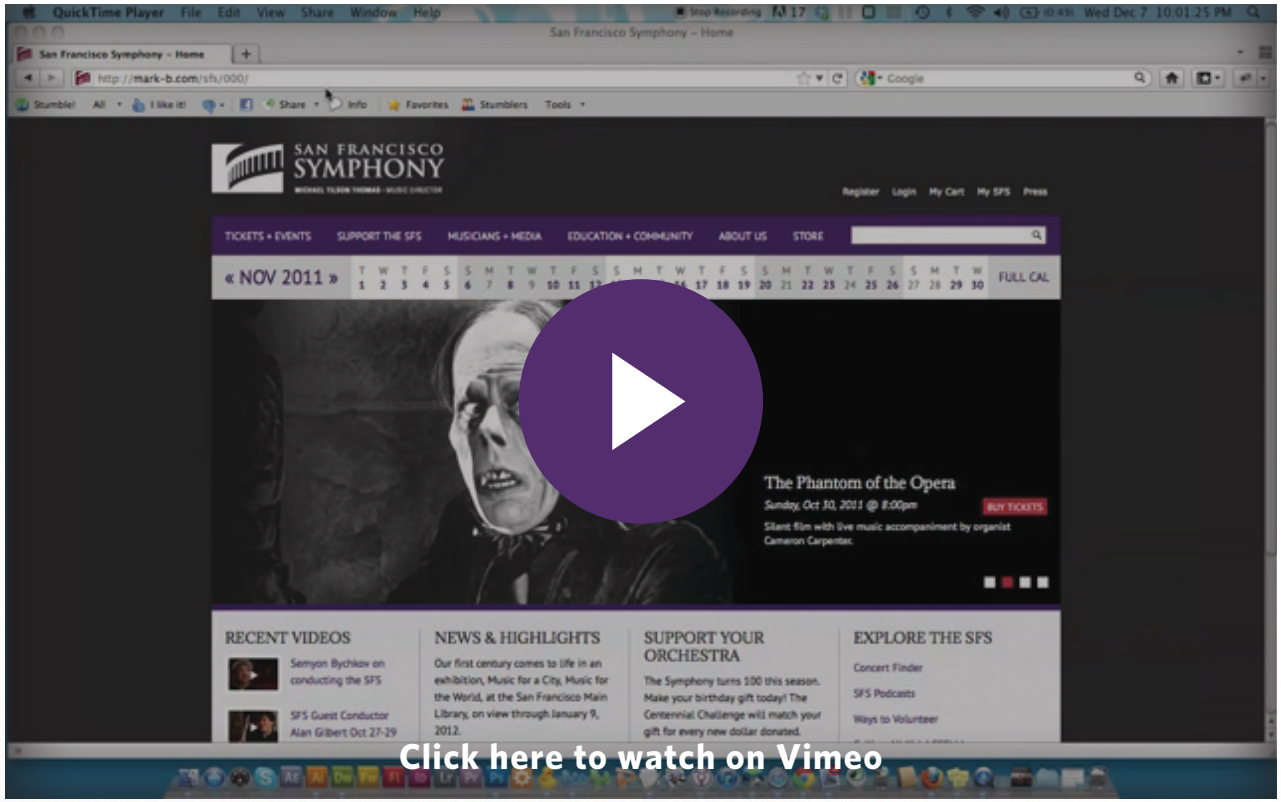
USABILITY TESTING: STAGE 2

TESTING

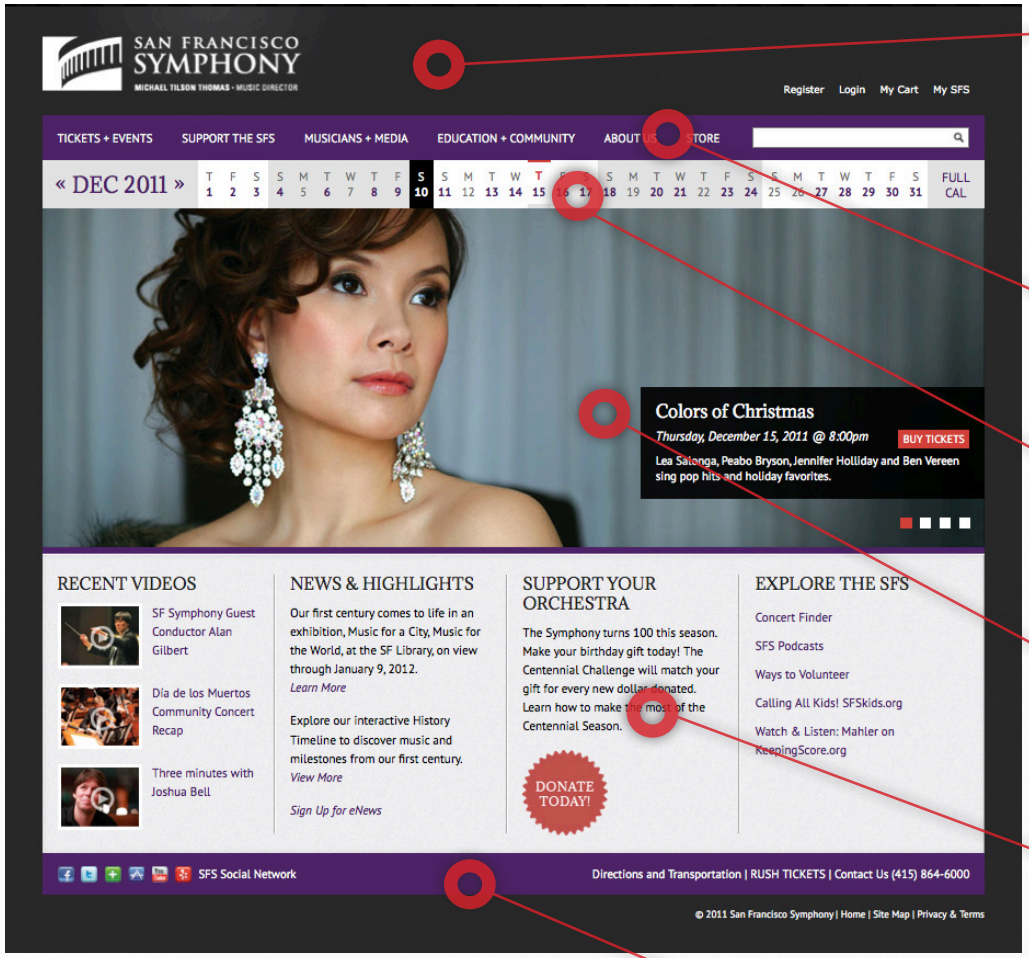
Later on in the process, after developing a live site, we conducted another usability test to see if there were any other major flaws in the site design and to troubleshoot how we could fix them.

RESULTS

This usability test again showed us that our site was relatively straightforward and easy to navigate. The user highlighted many things about the design. But some of the major issues that arose were the legibility of certain parts of the site. One, in particular, was the ticketing process where the seating charts were a bit small and a little difficult to understand at first. We would fix this in our final design tweaks. We also found our calendar page to be lacking in certain features that would help the user scan it easier.



NEW DESIGN OVERVIEW



COLOR

We wanted the site to have a modern and high-end feeling. We achieved this by using a dark background. Purple is the main accent color, where we felt it gave the symphony an air of modernism and heraldry. Red was used on highlight items such as the buy tickets buttons to compliment the design.

NAVIGATION

Our navigation takes a few cues from the old site, but it is designed with better spacing and legibility.

MINI CALENDAR

Our new mini-calendar has been reworked into a horizontal layout. It provides more freedom for the rest of the layout to breathe and differentiates our site from most other symphony sites.

SLIDER

We made the slider the largest item on the homepage simply because images speak much more than words. In combination with good design and great photographs, it really pulls the user in.

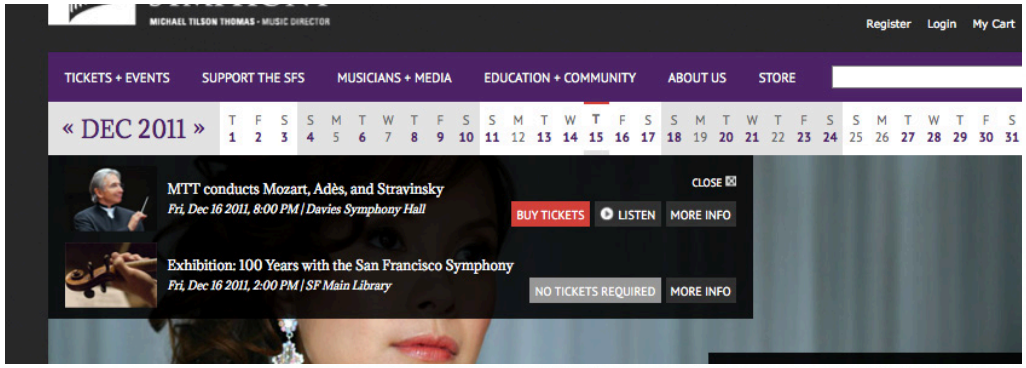
TYPOGRAPHY

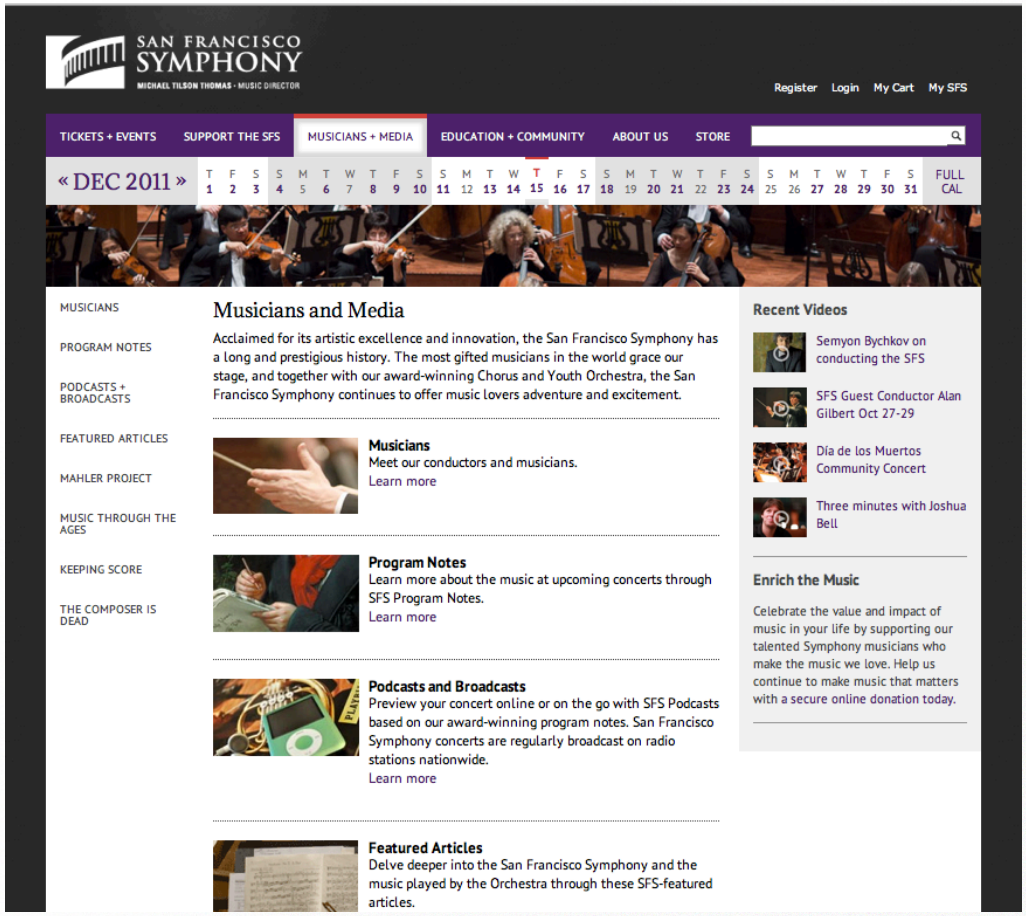
We decided to use a combination of “Adamina” and “PT Sans”, both from the Google Web Fonts API. Adamina is a serif that we use for headlines and page titles. PT Sans makes up the body copy and most of the text. Together, we feel they are natural compliments and have great readability.

FOOTER

Our new footer is minimal, where we wanted to provide only the most essential information. We kept it to social media icons, directions, rush tickets and contact information.

DESIGN: MINI CALENDAR AND LAYOUT





MINI-CALENDAR POPOUT MENU

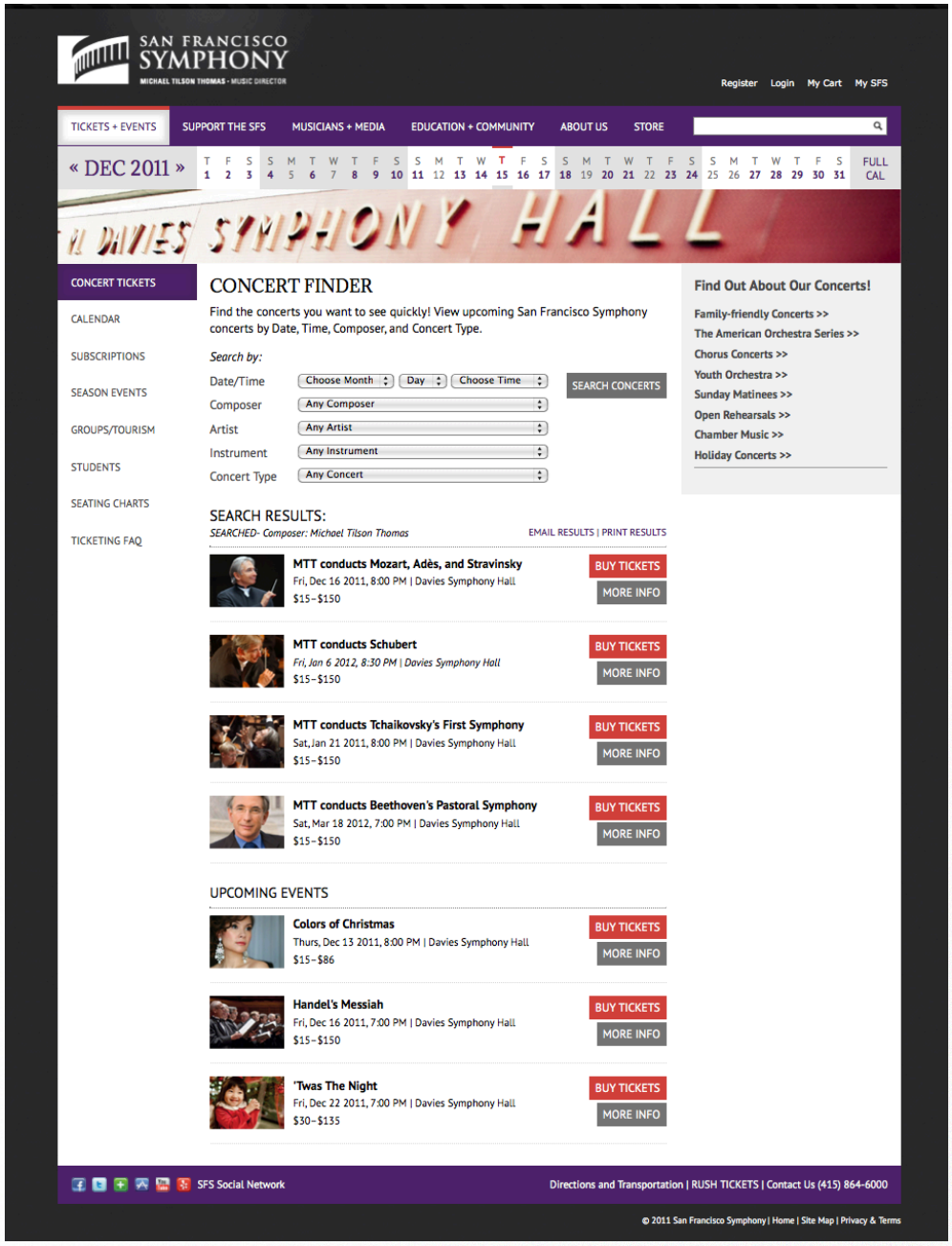
In addition to a new mini-calendar, we also made a new popout, animated menu. When a user clicks a date on the mini-calendar, a list populates below with the events scheduled for that day. We made sure that the list had good visual hierarchy and we also needed to make sure that different types of events were easy to distinguish between.

For concerts and events with tickets, we offered a bold "Buy Tickets" button, an audio preview, as well as a link to the event details page. For any free or broadcast style event, we offer a graphical notifier that states no tickets are required, and a link to that event details page.

SUBPAGE LAYOUT

The overall layout is that which was seen in our initial wireframes. We had much success in our planning and did not need to tweak much. The images shows you our basic sup-page layout. The left column acts a sub-navigation menu. The middle column is the main body of information. And the right column acts as a featured area to highlight different aspects that are related to the main content.

DESIGN: CONCERTS PAGE



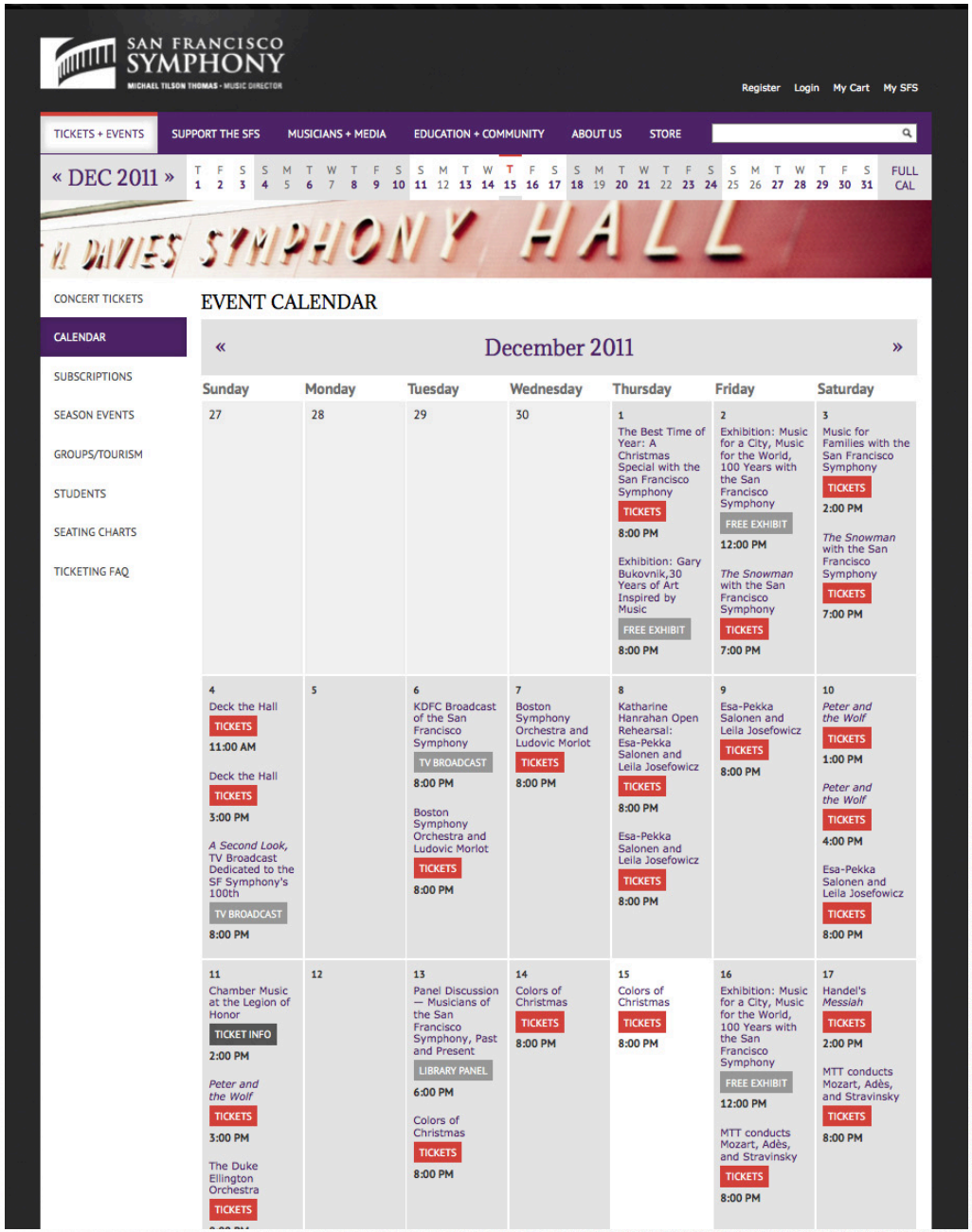
CONCERT FINDER

The concert finder page allows visitors to search for concerts using various filtering options such as date playing, composer, or concert type. In doing so, this de-clutters the page from an overwhelming list of concerts. Once they search for concerts, users have an option of either buying tickets, or learning more about the event. They also have an option for printing, or emailing results. Ultimately, we wanted this process to mimic other ticket finding sites like Ticketmaster and Fandango. But, we catered the queries and design to match information that pertains to the symphony and it's unique ticketing processes.

FEATURED EVENTS

On this page, we also wanted to feature upcoming events. So, on load, the upcoming events are already displayed in the search results area. But, after a search query is submitted, the events get pushed to bottom below the search results.

DESIGN: CALENDAR PAGE



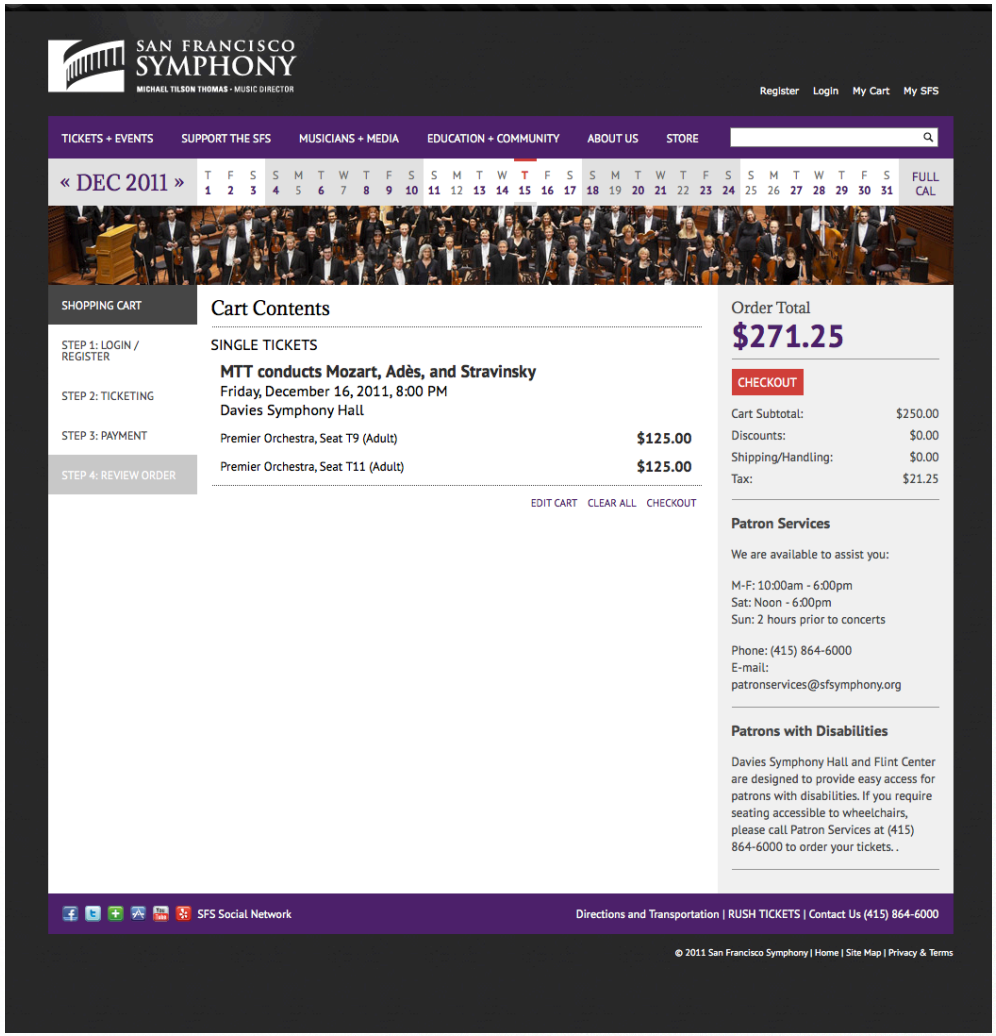
DESIGN

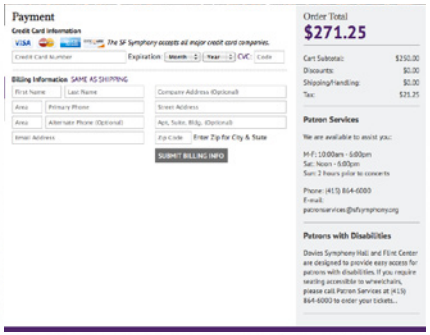
On our new calendar page, we focused on tying the design in with the rest of the site. The calendar, in general, does not leave many options to be changed without confusing users, so we kept the format very traditional. If users do not understand the new horizontal mini calendar, this calendar page acts as their main hub of navigating date ranges.

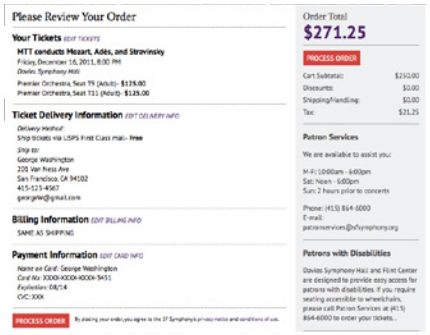
TICKET GRAPHIC INDICATORS

We included buttons to buy tickets as well as matching greyed-out indicators that show if tickets are not available for a certain event. By doing this, we solved one of the original problems of the website calendar, where users had a difficult time distinguishing between what events had tickets that were available to be purchased and what events did not (e.g. broadcasts and exhibits).

DESIGN: SHOPPING CART







DESIGN

The shopping cart was designed to be easy to understand and simple to use. We wanted users to distinguish all the information they needed without any excess clutter. The design of the cart and subsequent checkout processes are based on our two column layout that is effective in displaying our information here as well.

CHECKOUT PROCESS

Our checkout process requires only 4 steps, which is the minimal amount needed for a process of this sort. The first is a login/register page that the user may skip. The second is to select how one wants their tickets delivered. The third is billing and the final stage is a review. We wanted to make the process fast and simple to follow. You can see a video of this process on the following page.

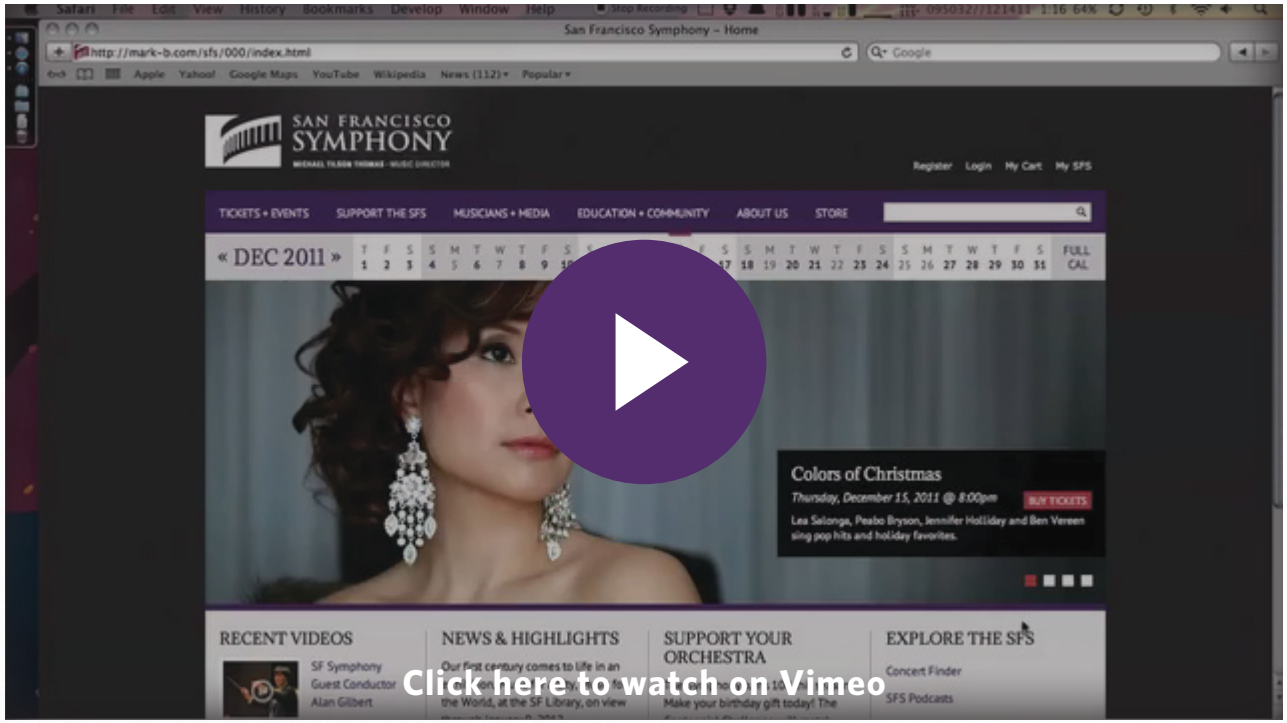
TICKETING PROCESS: WALKTHROUGH

DEMO

The video to the right shows a demo of the various waypoints to access different concerts, our ticketing process and the new checkout process.

OVERVIEW

Overall, we tried to make this process as simple and well designed as possible. We provided very straightforward access points to the ticketing process and wanted to mirror shopping experiences similar to that of Amazon, Ticketmaster and Fandango. We came up with a friendly solution that is easy to understand for the symphony's broad audience.



MOBILE SITE

WHY A MOBILE SITE?

A mobile version of the San Francisco Symphony website was created in order to expose the website to an increasing number of users with access to smartphones. By doing so, this helps accomplish one of their main goals of attracting a new, younger target audience (most of whom are the ones who have access to these new devices).

OVERVIEW:

- Gives access to navigation menu in vertical format.
- Events calendar is called out in navigation menu.
- Today's events are showcased on homepage.
- Visitors have the option of calling the Symphony for information, or viewing map and directions.

To view the live project, please **click here**, or visit **stanleydiaz.me/sfs**

THANK YOU!