

February 2002

**TILSON THOMAS, SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY TO PREMIERE
MACKEY'S PEDAL TONES**

Friday, February 22 marks the debut of *Pedal Tones*, **Steven Mackey's** new work for organ and orchestra. Michael Tilson Thomas conducts soloist John Walker and the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall. The program is repeated on February 23 and 24.

pulling out the stops

Pedal Tones was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony. "The project immediately appealed to me," says Mackey, who brought an unusual perspective to the organ: that of an electric guitarist. "Like the electric guitar, the organ is a 'controller,' hooked to an 'effects unit' – the banks of stops," observes Mackey. "Also, like the guitar and unlike any other concert music instrument, it can span the entire dynamic range of the capable. It can be heard in a forte tutti or, with the right 'effects' engaged, can accompany a solo oboe."

tones and drones

The percussion section, with its similarly wide range of color and dynamics, plays a leading role in *Pedal Tones*, as do the low brass and winds. "As the title suggests, the piece explores the effects of long sustained notes, especially low ones," says Mackey. "The organ notes played on the pedals are crucial but the lowest notes of the trombone, contrabass clarinet, and contrabassoon also figure prominently. The ubiquitous drones (*Pedal Tones*) and the long melody at the end will, I'm sure, leave people wondering if I was using an Indian raga – although I'm not."

praise for
Tuck and Roll

Meanwhile *Tuck and Roll*, an all-Mackey disc on RCA Red Seal, is garnering glowing reviews. It features MTT and the New World Symphony, with the composer as electric guitar soloist in the title concerto. Wrote Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times*, "The direct physicality and rawness of rock is at the core of the concerto; Mackey's guitar playing is impressive, and the melodic ideas are engaging."