



**St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



**Download high-resolution photos of the artists in “Songs of America” here: [bit.ly/38bZsQx](https://bit.ly/38bZsQx)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES “SONGS OF AMERICA,” A SIX-PART VIDEO PROJECT CELEBRATING THE UNIQUE VOICES OF AMERICAN MUSIC, BEGINNING JUNE 29 AT 7:00PM**

**SLSO musicians’ performances in collaboration with St. Louis-region artists and landmarks honor American voices through online videos**

**Installments feature SLSO Music Director Stéphane Denève on piano; St. Louis vocalists Kennedy Holmes, Brian Owens, and Malena Smith; crossover ensemble The 442s; and SLSO musicians in works by Sam Cooke, W.C. Handy, Scott Joplin, George Walker, as well as new arrangements of traditional songs by St. Louis musician Adam Maness**

**(June 25, 2020, St. Louis, MO)** – Today, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra announced the launch of its “Songs of America” video project, a collection of performances that celebrate the breadth of voices in American music, framed against a backdrop of St. Louis landmarks. SLSO Music Director Stéphane Denève and musicians of the SLSO are joined by St. Louis-area partners including singers, artists, and videographers for this series of pre-recorded videos, which will be made available through a variety of platforms and at no cost to viewers. These SLSO small ensemble performances were recorded between June 18 and June 20 at the orchestra’s home at Powell Hall and were filmed at notable locations throughout the St. Louis region.

The inaugural phase of the “SLSO Songs” project includes six video installments. Performances will be released daily, beginning on Monday, June 29, at 7:00pm on the [SLSO’s YouTube page](#), digital magazine [SLSO Stories](#), and on social media. The final two videos, one featuring SLSO Music Director Stéphane Denève and the other with vocalist Kennedy Holmes, will be released on Friday and Saturday, July 3 and 4.

The SLSO shares these musical portraits to showcase the spirit that makes St. Louis unique and to allow the community to connect through music during these challenging times. The project strives to inspire dialogue and celebrate the many voices in music, a bedrock of Denève’s Music Directorship and the foundation of the SLSO’s 2020/2021 classical season he programmed.

In addition to SLSO musicians and Music Director Stéphane Denève on piano, performances feature other St. Louis artists, including:

- **Kennedy Holmes**, vocalist and finalist on NBC’s *The Voice* (2018)



- **Brian Owens**, singer, songwriter, and community advocate
- **Malena Smith**, vocalist and SLSO IN UNISON Fellow
- **Adam Maness**, musician and arranger for Songs of America project
- **The 442s**, genre-bending instrumental ensemble

Filming for the SLSO’s “Songs of America” video project took place at key St. Louis landmarks, including:

- **Malcolm W. Martin Memorial Park, East St. Louis, Illinois:** Park overlooking downtown St. Louis dedicated to the memory of Malcolm W. Martin, a veteran and staunch community advocate
- **Scott Joplin State Historic Site, St. Louis:** the one-time home of Scott Joplin, composer and pianist, and the father of ragtime music
- **Soldiers Memorial Military Museum, St. Louis:** Downtown St. Louis facility honoring St. Louis-area military service members, veterans, and their families
- **Kiener Plaza Park, St. Louis:** Downtown St. Louis park, overlooking the Old Courthouse, site of the infamous *Scott vs. Sandford* case, in which Dred Scott, an enslaved man, unsuccessfully sued for his freedom in 1857
- **First Baptist Church-St. Louis:** The oldest African-American church west of the Mississippi River

The SLSO has partnered with videographers Jason Pippi and Austin Ratanasitee for this project.

Special thanks to the Centene Charitable Foundation, the Steward Family Foundation, and World Wide Technology for their support of the SLSO.

**Songs of America schedule**

The following installments of the SLSO’s “Songs of America” video project will be released daily at 7:00pm on the SLSO’s YouTube page, digital magazine SLSO Stories, and social media.

**Monday, June 29**

**BATES/WARD (arr. Maness)** “America the Beautiful”

Malena Smith, vocals  
Celeste Golden Boyer, violin  
Alison Harney, violin  
Leonid Plashinov-Johnson, viola  
Alvin McCall, cello

*Filmed at the Malcolm W. Martin Memorial Park, East St. Louis, Illinois*

**Tuesday, June 30**

**JOPLIN (arr. Abeling)** “The Easy Winners”



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Jennifer Nitchman, flute  
Cally Banham, oboe  
Tzuying Huang, clarinet  
Andrew Cuneo, bassoon  
Julie Thayer, horn  
Alan Stewart, drums

*Filmed at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site, St. Louis*

**Wednesday, July 1**

**WALKER**

*Lyric for Strings*

Gemma New, conductor  
Celeste Golden Boyer, violin  
Ann Fink, violin  
Asako Kuboki, violin  
Nicolae Bica, violin  
Jonathan Chu, viola  
Chris Tantillo, viola  
Alvin McCall, cello  
Bjorn Ranheim, cello  
Sarah Hogan Kaiser, bass

*Filmed at the Soldiers Memorial Military Museum, St. Louis*

**Thursday, July 2**

**COOKE**

*“A Change Is Gonna Come”*

Brian Owens, vocals  
The 442s  
Adam Maness, guitar  
Shawn Weil, violin  
Michael Casimir, viola  
Bjorn Ranheim, cello  
Bob DeBoo, bass

*Filmed at Kiener Plaza Park, St. Louis*

**Friday, July 3**

**W.C. HANDY (arr. Brian Holland)** *“St. Louis Blues”*



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Stéphane Denève, piano

**Saturday, July 4**

**TRADITIONAL (arr. Maness)**

**“Amazing Grace”**

Kennedy Holmes, vocals

Jessica Cheng, violin

Andrea Jarrett, violin

Andrew Francois, viola

Jennifer Humphreys, cello

*Filmed at First Baptist Church-St. Louis*

The SLSO continues to share the power of music with the St. Louis community through rebroadcasts of previous concerts on St. Louis Public Radio, airing each Saturday at 8:00pm CDT on 90.7 KWMU and ([stlpublicradio.org](http://stlpublicradio.org)). Hosted by Robert Peterson of St. Louis Public Radio and Tim Munro, SLSO Creative Partner and Grammy Award winner, the concerts include interviews with artists during intermission. Full program listings can be found at [slo.org/radiobroadcasts](http://slo.org/radiobroadcasts). On the first Sunday of the month, the Nine Network of Public Media televises a previous SLSO concert. Broadcasts are at 5:00pm CDT on the Nine Network (Channel 9) and later [posted to its website](#).

### **About the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra**

Celebrated as one of today’s most exciting and enduring orchestras, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 140th year with the 2019/2020 season and its first with Music Director Stéphane Denève. Widely considered one of the world’s finest orchestras, the SLSO maintains its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community connections—all in service to its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The SLSO musical family also includes two resident choruses: the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, founded in 1976 by Music Director Jerzy Semkow; and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, an ensemble focused on the music of African-American and African cultures founded in 1994; and also the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, founded by Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin in 1970.

In addition to its regular concert performances at Powell Hall, which has been the permanent home of the SLSO for more than 50 years, the orchestra is an integral part of the diverse and vibrant St. Louis community, presenting dozens of free education and community programs and performances throughout the region each year. It presents *St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer*, a four-program series at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, with the upcoming season marking the 43rd year of the partnership.

The Grammy Award-winning SLSO’s impact beyond the St. Louis region is realized through weekly Saturday night concert broadcasts on St. Louis Public Radio, acclaimed recordings, and regular touring



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activity. A sought-after artistic partner by preeminent musicians and composers from across the globe, as well as by local and national organizations, the SLSO enjoys a long history of robust and enduring artistic collaborations that have developed and deepened over the years.

Today, the SLSO builds on the institution's current momentum on all fronts, including artistic, financial, audience growth, and community impact, and looks toward the future with Stéphane Denève. Denève begins his tenure as the SLSO's 13th Music Director with the 19/20 season. For more information, visit [slo.org](http://slo.org).

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