



**St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA SHARES RESULTS OF ITS 2019/2020 SEASON AT ANNUAL MEETING, HIGHLIGHTING ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS, COMMUNITY IMPACT, INNOVATIVE OUTREACH, AND FINANCIAL STABILITY**

**In a season that welcomed Stéphane Denève as the orchestra's 13th Music Director, the SLSO celebrated a Franco-American arch of musical friendship, experienced strong annual giving, honored the 50th anniversary of the Youth Orchestra, and delivered the power of music to the region online and on air**

**Steven L. Finerty named Board Chair, succeeding Norman Eaker**

**(October 13, 2020, St. Louis, MO)** – Today at its Annual Meeting conducted via Zoom, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra shared the significant artistic achievements, community impact, and positive financial results of its 2019/2020 season. The SLSO celebrated its 140th season, Stéphane Denève's acclaimed first as the orchestra's 13th Music Director, which was filled with remarkable performances, strong philanthropic giving, innovative musical outreach when live performances had to be canceled, and creative collaborations. The SLSO also released the results of the Economic and Community Impact report it commissioned, which found the SLSO triggers more than \$96 million in regional economic activity each year and generates more than 1,000 jobs.

During the meeting, the SLSO detailed the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on its 19/20 season: the SLSO had to cancel or postpone 59 performances between March and August. The resulting financial impact on the SLSO was a loss of \$3.2 million in earned revenue for FY20. Despite this significant impact, the SLSO finished the 2020 fiscal year (ending August 31, 2020) with a balanced budget. This reflects the Board and executive leadership's meticulous financial management of expenses, including shared sacrifice by SLSO musicians, Music Director, and Executive Team, and the extraordinary generosity of the St. Louis community. The SLSO management greatly appreciates the significant salary concessions SLSO musicians made since the beginning of the pandemic in the spring, enabling the SLSO to reduce fixed salary expenses from April through August and maintain the financial health of the organization.

At the Annual Meeting, 11 trustees were re-elected by the Members of the Corporation for another three-year term on the SLSO Board. Peter Van Cleve (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner) was elected to the Board for a first term. The Board re-elected Emily Pulitzer as Secretary and David Steward as Vice Chair.

Steven L. Finerty was elected Chair of the SLSO Board of Trustees. Finerty, Chairman and Co-Founder of Argent Capital Funds, was former Chair of the SLSO Endowment Trust from 2001 to 2016. He succeeds Norman Eaker, whose distinguished tenure as SLSO Board Chair was marked by notable institutional successes.



**Norman Eaker, outgoing Chair of the SLSO Board of Trustees**, said, “This season launched an exciting new era for the SLSO with Stéphane Denève. I want to thank the Board and Marie-Hélène for their extraordinary leadership during this challenging year. The creativity and dedication of our remarkable musicians and staff, as well as their shared sacrifice, enabled the SLSO to continue serving our community. With Steve Finerty as incoming Board Chair, Stéphane Denève leading our artistic vision and musical spirit, and Marie-Hélène leading our institution, I believe the future of the SLSO’s contributions to our community has never been more promising.”

**Marie-Hélène Bernard, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra President and CEO**, said, “It was a remarkable year for the SLSO despite the challenges our community faced and we are deeply grateful for Norm Eaker and our Board leadership. Stéphane Denève was warmly welcomed by St. Louis, his musical home. Together, they exude vibrancy and a commitment to positioning our region as a cultural destination. The SLSO continued to advance its mission to make music accessible to all, elevating equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organization as it shapes programming, communicates the value of music, and delivers education and community programs. The pandemic stretched our creativity and our strengths as a nimble organization. While we started many new projects to meet the needs of this moment, we’ve also done this with an eye towards the future so these efforts can serve our community for years to come. Throughout the entire year, the St. Louis community’s generous support enabled us to share the power of music in new ways.”

### **Key Institutional and Artistic Highlights**

- **Stéphane Denève’s Inaugural Season as Music Director**

The St. Louis community enthusiastically welcomed Stéphane Denève during his inaugural season as Music Director. Throughout the season, Stéphane and the SLSO celebrated a Franco-American arch, exploring a shared musical friendship. His classical programs featured a wide range of repertoire—including works by John Adams, Beethoven, Anna Clyne, Debussy, Gershwin, Jennifer Higdon, Poulenc, Ravel, Wagner, John Williams—plus two world premieres by American composers Kevin Puts and Aaron Jay Kernis, the U.S. premiere of Guillaume Connesson’s *A Kind of Trane*, and the St. Louis premiere of an SLSO co-commission: *Silent Night Elegy* by Puts. Stéphane began the season leading the SLSO at the annual Forest Park concert, helped St. Louis ring in 2020 at the BMO Wealth Management New Year’s Eve Celebration, and worked with the SLSO’s Symphony Chorus, the IN UNISON Chorus, and Youth Orchestra throughout the season.

- **New Accessibility Initiatives**

Stéphane and the SLSO focused on making music accessible to all through several new initiatives, including \$15 tickets for all Classical concerts, the Crafted Happy Hour concert, and Stéphane Seats, a dedicated block of free tickets for students, teachers, and community partners at each of his concerts.

- **New Artist-in-Residence**

Stéphane’s close collaborator and friend, celebrated pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, joined the SLSO as the Jean-Paul and Isabelle Montupet Artist-in-Residence, performing with the SLSO for Opening Weekend, as well as in January, both at Powell Hall and at Washington University in St. Louis for an evening of chamber music with SLSO musicians.



- **John Williams**

Stéphane also welcomed longtime friend and legendary composer John Williams to St. Louis for an unforgettable evening with the SLSO. The enthusiastic sold-out audience experienced a phenomenal concert of some of Williams' most beloved pieces. The one-night-only concert sold out in approximately 30 minutes. The SLSO also sold out 11 other concerts during the season, including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, An Evening with Ben Folds, and movies *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Home Alone*.

- **Commitment to Music of Our Time**

The SLSO advanced its tradition of championing music of our time as it introduced nine new works to audiences this season, including two world premieres of SLSO-commissioned pieces by American composers Kevin Puts and Aaron Jay Kernis, the U.S. premiere of the orchestral version of Guillaume Connesson's *A Kind of Trane*, and the St. Louis premiere of an SLSO co-commission by Puts. The SLSO also continued its 15-year partnership with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation through *St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer*, a concert series focused on music of our time.

- **Sharing the Power of Music**

After the SLSO had to begin postponing and canceling concerts in March, it quickly launched new programs to engage with audiences and share the power of music with the community. These innovative programs included the launch of the Instrument Playground Online, videos introducing audiences to the instruments of the orchestra and musicians who play them; and virtual Lunch & Learns, roundtable discussions featuring Stéphane Denève, Marie-Hélène Bernard, chorus directors Amy Kaiser and Kevin McBeth, plus a variety of musicians and special guests on topics ranging from the reimagined 20/21 season and the SLSO's IN UNISON programs to the role of women throughout the SLSO's history. More than 1,000 people attended these virtual events over the summer.

The SLSO also launched two video projects: #SLSOatHome, a series of 38 videos from SLSO musicians and members of the entire SLSO family filmed at their homes, which were watched more than 100,000 times; and SLSO *Songs of America*, a project celebrating the breadth of voices in American music and featuring St. Louis artists and landmarks that showcase the unique spirit of the community. Six videos were released the week of July 4, with two additional videos added over the summer. To date, the videos have reached more than 300,000 people online and an additional 185,000 people on the Nine Network of Public Media.

- **Milestone Anniversary for the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra**

Throughout the 19/20 season, the SLSO celebrated a special key institutional milestone: the 50th anniversary of the Youth Orchestra (YO), which was founded in 1970 by then-Assistant Conductor Leonard Slatkin. The season-long celebration included a unique homecoming—a play-in concert with current YO members performing alongside YO alumni, including members of the inaugural YO from 1970, musicians from every class, and current SLSO musicians who are YO alumni. Gemma New, Music Director of the YO and Resident Conductor since 2016, concluded her tenure at the end of the season.



### **FY20 Financial Results and Community Support**

- For the fiscal year ended August 31, 2020, the SLSO reported a balanced budget despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Total operating revenue was \$27.383 million, while operating expenses totaled \$27.372 million.
- The SLSO reported strong philanthropic support during the year. It raised \$8.06 million for its Annual Fund, slightly more than last year's record year of \$8.01 million. There was significant growth in Friends-level giving (gifts of less than \$1,500), which more than doubled during the year.
- More than 40 percent of patrons donated the value of their tickets to canceled concerts to the SLSO, a total of more than \$378,000 that helped support the SLSO during the shutdown.
- The endowment remained strong at \$227 million. The SLSO's endowment plays a vital role in providing financial support to further the SLSO's mission. The distribution from the endowment draw proved critical to the stability of the SLSO this year, providing approximately 40 percent of the SLSO's income.
- SLSO musicians made significant salary concessions this season, enabling the SLSO to reduce fixed salary expenses from April through August. Through negotiations with Members of the orchestra and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 2-197, the agreement enabled musicians to retain on average 75 percent of their compensation from April through August 30. The sacrifices made by the members of the orchestra were essential to maintaining the financial health of the organization.
- The SLSO received a Paycheck Protection Program loan for \$3.6 million, which enabled the SLSO to sustain salaries for musicians and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The loan helped cover salaries and benefits for more than 150 people for almost 12 weeks and support the orchestra's long-term stability.
- The SLSO shared the topline results of its Economic and Community Impact Report, a study commissioned from Robert Lewis, Assistant Professor at Saint Louis University. The study, anchored in four years of data, revealed that the SLSO triggers \$96.1 million in annual economic activity throughout metro St. Louis, ranking as one of the very top orchestras in the United States. SLSO patrons spend \$5.2 million per year in the regional economy that can be directly attributed to their participation in SLSO events. A summary of the report and the full report can be found online at [slo.org/impact](https://slo.org/impact).

### **Overall Reach and Community Impact**

- More than 190,000 people experienced the power of live music with the SLSO at Powell Hall and across the region. The SLSO presented 252 total concerts, opening the season in front of a crowd of 20,000 at its annual free concert for the St. Louis community in Forest Park.
- The SLSO focused on accessibility through new initiatives. It introduced \$15 tickets to all Classical concerts, which more than 1,800 people took advantage of. And the SLSO welcomed 238 students, teachers, and



community partners as free guests through Stéphane Seats, a dedicated block of seats for each of Stéphane's programs.

- In November, the SLSO presented its first-ever Crafted Concert—a casual concert experience with food and drink offerings from local restaurants, and Stéphane serving as a host to welcome new audiences and draw listeners closer to the music-making process. More than one-third of Crafted attendees were new to the SLSO.
- An estimated 430,000 people experienced the SLSO through its public media partners: both the Saturday night classical concert broadcasts live on St. Louis Public Radio, 90.7 – KWMU and its live internet stream (now in its 10th year), and also through the monthly *Night at the Symphony* broadcasts on the Nine Network of Public Media, on the air for five years. The radio broadcasts continued after the COVID shutdown and throughout the summer with weekly rebroadcasts of previous concerts.
- Last season, students and teachers from 583 schools across the bi-state region participated in SLSO education programs. Approximately 22,000 students attended education concerts at Powell Hall. In addition, more than 1,200 teachers participated in SLSO professional development workshops, including EXTRA CREDIT On Stage at Powell Hall, a side-by-side concert where music educators perform a free community concert at Powell Hall next to their SLSO musician counterparts. The SLSO also hosted a Sensory-Friendly Education Concert, in partnership with the St. Louis Jewish Community Center, for students from Special School District of St. Louis County and throughout the region.

### **Board of Trustees**

- **Trustees Re-elected**

Eleven board members were re-elected for another three-year term: Steve Baldwin (Washington University), Barry Beracha (Retired CEO Sara Lee Bakery Group), Susan Eickhoff (KPMG, LLP), Carolyn Farrell (Community Volunteer), Carolyn Henges (Retired Treasurer Jay Henges Enterprises), Molly Hyland (Commerce Bank), Marjorie Ivey (Community Volunteer), Walter Shifrin (Shifrin & Associates, Inc.), Rex Sinquefield (Show-Me Institute), Susan Veidt (Retired FleishmanHillard), and Phoebe Dent Weil (Community Volunteer).

- **New Trustee**

Peter Van Cleve (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner) was elected to the Board of Trustees for a first term.

### **Officers**

- **Norm Eaker's Tenure as Chair of the SLSO Board**

During his three-year tenure as Board Chair, Eaker oversaw a smooth transition between music directors, setting the stage for Stéphane Dénève's tenure as Music Director Designate and Music Director. He led the board to craft a roadmap for the SLSO during a pivotal time in the orchestra's history, expanding the institution's financial stability and culture of philanthropy, and deepening the SLSO's strategic approach to audience development. Eaker's vision for elevating the organization as an accessible civic asset and stretching its capacity for innovation positioned the SLSO strongly in the community and the industry.



Under his leadership, the SLSO posted a balanced budget for four consecutive years and reported record philanthropic support.

- **Steven L. Finerty, Chair of the SLSO Board of Trustees**

Steve Finerty is the Chairman and Co-Founder of Argent Capital Funds and partner at Moneta group. He was elected to the SLSO Board of Trustees in 2020 and now begins his two-year term as Board Chair. Previously, Finerty served as Chair of the SLSO Endowment Trust from 2001 to 2016, responsible for leading the growth of the trust to \$227 million today. He also has served a number of other St. Louis nonprofit boards, including The MUNY, Forest Park Forever, and the St. Louis Zoo.

- **Officers Re-elected**

The Board voted to continue the term of two officers: Emily Pulitzer (Pulitzer Arts Foundation) as secretary and David Steward (World Wide Technology) as Vice Chair.

You can read the full Annual Report at [slo.org/impact](https://slo.org/impact).

### **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 141st year with the 2020/2021 season and its second 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; and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, an ensemble focused on the music of African-American and African cultures, founded in 1994. The SLSO family also includes 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 collaboration with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, with the upcoming 2021 Festival Season the 44th year of this extraordinary 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 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



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stéphane denève : music director



growth, and community impact, and looks toward the future with Stéphane Denève. For more information, visit [slo.org](http://slo.org).

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