



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



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**ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA RECEIVES GRANT TO ADVANCE EQUITY, DIVERSITY,
AND INCLUSION EFFORTS**

**Grant awarded to the SLSO for the second year in a row from The Catalyst Fund of the League of
American Orchestras**

(July 12, 2020, St. Louis, MO) – The League of American Orchestras has awarded a \$19,500 grant to the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra to strengthen its institutional understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and to help transform organizational culture. Given to 25 orchestras nationwide, the one-year grant comprises the final round of The Catalyst Fund, the League's three-year, \$2.1 million grant-making program, made possible by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

"American orchestras have made a strong commitment to embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion and reverse decades of inequity on-stage and off—an imperative made even more urgent by the pandemic's disproportionate impact on communities of color," said **Simon Woods, the League's President and CEO**. "This is a long-term journey, but it starts with taking immediate action and creating organizational momentum. We're grateful for The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's long-standing support for the orchestral field, and for the strategic vision that has allowed this group of orchestras to model what change looks like for our entire field through their Catalyst Fund grants."

The grant will support the SLSO's ongoing EDI work. In 2015, SLSO President and CEO Marie-Hélène Bernard led work to create an EDI roadmap for the SLSO, including it as a key component in the SLSO's 2016-2021 strategic plan. Recently, the SLSO created an internal EDI task force and provided training for musicians, staff, and board members.

The Catalyst Fund has made a strong impact on the field, with several orchestras receiving multiple grants over three years to sustain their work, including the SLSO. Since its launch in 2019, 76 Catalyst Fund grants were awarded to 49 orchestras of all sizes and types, each demonstrating a strong commitment and dedication to EDI work and an increased awareness that systemic change requires a sustained effort over time. More than 80 percent of first-year grantees reported making either policy or programming changes as a result of their funded work, with most engaging musicians and board members alongside staff.

EDI practitioners are central to The Catalyst Fund grant program, helping orchestras implement a range of organizational development activities involving musicians, staff, board, and, in some cases,



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volunteers and community leaders. These include anti-bias trainings, institutional audits, the creation of formal EDI plans, and work to build consensus and integrate EDI into mission statements and culture. Community building is also a key component of the program; The Catalyst Fund Learning Cohort, made possible by the generous support of the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, enables past and present grantees to interact with colleagues through remote and (pre-pandemic) in-person convenings, peer learning, and a dedicated web-based forum.

League member orchestras were eligible to apply for Catalyst Fund grants; applications were reviewed by an independent panel of EDI experts and practitioners in the arts and orchestral fields.

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 founded in 1994 and focused on the music of African American and African cultures. The SLSO family also includes the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, founded by Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin in 1970.

The dynamic partnership with Stéphane Denève is seen through his visionary storytelling, which is at the heart of the SLSO's artistic profile and has resulted in stronger connections with artists, as well as the elevation of the SLSO's role as music education leader. 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 centered on music of today. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

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. The SLSO is also growing its digital presence that helps make music accessible to all.

This expanding content portfolio includes digital concerts filmed at Powell Hall on the SLSO's new high-definition camera equipment, videos series such as *Songs of America*, virtual Lunch & Learn events, and a robust online education program platform that features curriculum materials,



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Instrument Playground Online, and SoundLab—a four-part video series for teachers, students, and families to create music and engage in the science of sound.

Since the arrival of Marie-Hélène Bernard as President and CEO in 2015, the SLSO has realigned its mission to making music more accessible, while fostering a culture of radical welcome and belonging for all. Building on current momentum, the SLSO serves as a convener of individuals, creators, and ideas, and is committed to build community through compelling and inclusive musical experiences. Having sharpened its longstanding focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, the SLSO embraces its strengths as a responsive, nimble organization while invigorating partnerships locally and elevating its presence globally. For more information, visit slo.org.

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