



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



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THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA SHARES RESULTS OF ITS 2020/2021 SEASON AT ANNUAL MEETING, HIGHLIGHTING INNOVATIVE OUTREACH, ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS, COMMUNITY IMPACT, AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

The SLSO made music accessible to the community through live concerts, new digital projects, and community concerts, delivering the power of music to the St. Louis region and beyond, generating 4.5 million impressions

Music Director Stéphane Denève signs contract extension through the 2025/2026 Season

(November 2, 2021, St. Louis, MO) – Today at its Annual Meeting, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra shared the significant artistic achievements, community impact, and positive financial results of its 2020/2021 season. The SLSO celebrated its 141st season, Stéphane Denève’s second as the orchestra’s 13th Music Director, which included powerful performances for live audiences, strong philanthropic giving, and innovative musical outreach through digital channels.

In the 20/21 season, the SLSO’s range of concerts plus digital and social media projects generated 4.5 million impressions. The SLSO was one of a few orchestras nationwide to host indoor concerts for live audiences, capturing those performances on its new high-definition camera system and producing them into digital concerts, which expanded the orchestra’s reach beyond Powell Hall. Creative collaborations continued throughout the season, with weekly broadcasts of previous concerts on 90.7 KWMU St. Louis Public Radio, *St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer* presented as video projects, and musicians visiting partner organizations throughout the region—from the Missouri History Museum and Forest Park to St. Louis County Library branches—for *SLSO On the Go* concerts.

This year, the SLSO Board of Trustees extended Denève’s contract as Music Director through the 2025/2026 season and President and CEO Marie-Hélène Bernard’s contract through the 2024/2025 season.

During the meeting, the SLSO detailed the ongoing impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on its 20/21 season: while the SLSO was able to present some concerts with live audiences, it was a fraction (approximately 40 percent) of its regular season with significantly reduced audience capacity. For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2021, the SLSO reported an operating loss of \$1.4 million. The SLSO was able to offset the loss and remain in the black due to federal assistance. Combined with strong philanthropy and meticulous expense management—supported by salary concessions from SLSO musicians and staff—the SLSO maintained a healthy financial position despite the pandemic-related challenges.

At the Annual Meeting, President and CEO Marie-Hélène Bernard presented the SLSO’s Mabel Dorn Reeder



Honorary Chair to Kristin Ahlstrom, Associate Principal Second Violin. Ahlstrom, a member of the SLSO since 1996, was unanimously chosen as the third recipient of the award, which was established in 2011 to recognize excellence in artistry and leadership within the orchestra and community. In addition, Members of the Corporation re-elected two trustees for another three-year term each on the SLSO Board: Steve Mackin, Executive Vice President, Mercy; President, Mercy St. Louis Community; and Incoming President and CEO, Mercy; and Andrew O'Brien, Founder of O'Brien Law Firm.

Steve Finerty, Chair of the SLSO Board of Trustees, said, "We are grateful for the generosity of the St. Louis community. Thanks to their support, we were able to make music accessible throughout the pandemic. I want to thank the Board, Music Director Stéphane Denève, and President & CEO Marie-Hélène Bernard for their steady and innovative leadership over the past season. I applaud the resilience of our remarkable musicians and staff. Their dedication and creativity enabled the SLSO to serve our community through music in a variety of new and unique ways."

Marie-Hélène Bernard, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra President and CEO, said, "Thanks to the remarkable support of the St. Louis community, the SLSO was able to focus on making music accessible to all. The new efforts we created, including digital concerts and online education programs, are now key components of how we connect and engage with our community. I am grateful to Steve Finerty and our Board for their tremendous leadership and support, and to our entire team—Stéphane Denève, our musicians, staff, Symphony Volunteers, two choruses, and Youth Orchestra—for their unwavering commitment to our mission and for sharing the power of music with our community in St. Louis, across the United States, and around the world."

Key Institutional and Artistic Highlights

- **Stéphane Denève Leads Live and Digital Concerts; Signs Extension through 2026**

Throughout the season, Denève reworked programs to accommodate smaller musician ensemble sizes with music to comfort and heal. His programs, performed for live audiences and also shared as digital concerts, featured a wide range of repertoire—from Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, "Eroica" and Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* Suite to Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and T.J. Cole's *Death of the Poet*.

The SLSO and Denève extended his contract as Music Director through the 25/26 season. "St. Louis is my musical home, and I am truly over the moon to deepen my relationship with this wonderful community in the years to come," he said.

- **Celebrating Staff Milestones: IN UNISON Chorus Director Kevin McBeth's 10th Anniversary and Appointment of Assistant Conductor Stephanie Childress**

The SLSO celebrated members of its musical family this season: Kevin McBeth marked 10 years as director of the SLSO's IN UNISON Chorus, its resident chorus founded in 1994 that focuses on the music of

African American and African cultures. Denève appointed Stephanie Childress as Assistant Conductor and Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. Childress, a conductor and violinist



who was the second-prize winner at the inaugural La Maestra conducting competition in 2020, made her performance and conducting debuts with the orchestra in March and April 2021.

- **Sharing the Power of Music at Powell Hall and Throughout St. Louis**

At Powell Hall, the SLSO performed 45 concerts for 7,300 audience members. This represented 40 percent of its regular season and 5 percent of the annual Powell Hall audience, due to social distancing. SLSO musicians also performed for the community throughout the region, with 57 *SLSO On the Go* concerts that shared music with more than 2,000 people in neighborhoods, hospitals, and parks.

- **Connecting through Online Events and Digital Programming**

The SLSO also welcomed more than 4,300 people to its variety of online events hosted throughout the season. Virtual events included monthly Lunch & Learn discussion panels, plus watch parties for SLSO SoundLab education videos. The SLSO installed a high-definition camera system in Powell Hall. This investment, thanks to a generous grant from the Berges Family Foundation, enabled the SLSO to make music accessible to all, producing 35 videos, including 11 digital concerts and five family/education videos which were viewed almost 200,000 times. In total, SLSO digital and social media projects generated 4.5 million impressions.

FY21 Financial Results and Community Support

- For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2021, the SLSO reported an operating loss of \$1.4 million, which was offset by federal assistance, enabling the SLSO to close its fiscal year in the black. Total operating revenue was \$19.205 million, while operating expenses totaled \$20.642 million.
- The SLSO reported strong philanthropic support during the year. It raised \$7.758 million for its Annual Fund. The Finerty Family Challenge raised \$320,000 for the Annual Fund—with 64 percent coming from new gifts. The challenge doubled both number of donors and total donations over last year’s challenge.
- The endowment remained strong at \$277 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 55 percent of the SLSO’s income.
- SLSO musicians made significant salary concessions this season, enabling the SLSO to reduce fixed salary expenses. Through negotiations with Members of the orchestra and the American Federation of Musicians, Local 2-197, the agreement enabled musicians to retain on average 81 percent of their compensation this season. The sacrifices made by the members of the orchestra were essential to maintaining the financial health of the organization.



- The SLSO received a total of \$8.1 million in Federal Assistance, including Paycheck Protection program (PPP) loans, the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, and Employee Retention Tax Credits, which supported salaries over a two-year period (FY20 and FY21) and will continue to support the organization in FY22 while it experiences significant loss in ticket revenue due to the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall Reach and Community Impact

- More than 9,500 people experienced the power of live music with the SLSO at Powell Hall and across the region. The SLSO presented 102 live performances, including 45 concerts at Powell Hall and 57 *SLSO On the Go* concerts throughout the St. Louis community.
- Through its new digital education programs, the SLSO reached teachers and students in 42 states and 15 countries. More than 56,000 students experienced SLSO SoundLab, the SLSO's new digital education video series, and a digital Tiny Tunes concert designed for Pre-K students. More than 240 teachers participated in virtual professional development sessions with SLSO musicians and staff. The SLSO also offered its first-ever SoundLab Summer Camp for 24 young musicians in third through fifth grades.
- An estimated 730,000 people experienced the SLSO concerts from previous seasons through its public media partners: Saturday night classical concert rebroadcasts on 90.7 KWMU St. Louis Public Radio and monthly *Night at the Symphony* broadcasts on Nine PBS.
- More than 40,000 people from six continents engaged with the SLSO's digital magazine, SLSO Stories, learning about the orchestra and its musicians through articles, photos, and videos.

Mabel Dorn Reeder Honorary Chair

Kristin Ahlstrom, Associate Principal Second Violin and Virginia V. Weldon, M.D., Chair, was unanimously selected as the Mabel Dorn Reeder Honorary Chair for 2021-2026. Ahlstrom, a member of the SLSO since 1996, also served as concertmaster of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra while in high school.

The chair was established by the Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation in July 2010. It is awarded, based on excellence in artistry and leadership within the orchestra and community, to a member of the SLSO for a five-year period and is accompanied by a one-time stipend for professional development. Foundation trustee Mabel Purkerson, Reeder's goddaughter, said that the award is a way to support both the SLSO and individual musicians, especially the orchestra members' commitment to the St. Louis community.

Bernard said of Ahlstrom: "She was unanimously chosen in recognition of her extraordinary contributions since joining the SLSO 25 years ago. Kristin was also selected for continuously demonstrating excellence in artistry and leadership within the Orchestra through her musicianship, collegiality, and participation in musical activities in the community."

Board of Trustees



- **Trustees Re-elected**

Two board members were re-elected to serve another three-year term: Steve Mackin (Executive Vice President, Mercy; President, Mercy St. Louis Community; and Incoming President and CEO, Mercy) and Andrew O'Brien (Founder, O'Brien Law Firm).

You can read the full Annual Report at slo.org/impact.

About the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

Celebrated as a leading American orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 142nd year with the 2021/2022 season and its third with [Music Director Stéphane Denève](#). The SLSO serves the St. Louis region through its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community collaborations, honoring its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The core of the SLSO's artistic foundation is its dynamic partnership with Stéphane Denève. Denève's energetic musicianship, visionary storytelling, and collaborative spirit have created stronger connections with local and visiting artists, as well as advanced the SLSO's role as a leader in music education. The SLSO musical family also includes two resident choruses: the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, founded in 1976, performs choral-orchestral music from the Baroque era to today; and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, founded in 1994, focuses on the music of African American and African traditions.

In addition to its concerts at historic Powell Hall, which has been the SLSO's home for more than 50 years, the orchestra is an integral part of the vibrant St. Louis community. Orchestra musicians share dozens of education and community performances throughout the region each year at medical facilities, places of worship, community centers, and schools. The St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, founded by Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin in 1970, is the region's premiere training orchestra for high school and college students. The SLSO is proud to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its education programs in 2021.

For more than 15 years, the *St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer* series has highlighted composers and music of today through innovative performances in collaboration with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. The SLSO has also served as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for more than 40 years and enjoys a long history of robust and enduring artistic collaborations with individuals and organizations locally and around the world.

The Grammy® Award-winning SLSO's impact is expanding with a growing digital presence that helps make music more accessible to all, realized through weekly Saturday night concert broadcasts on St. Louis Public Radio, acclaimed recordings, and regular tours domestically and abroad. This expanding content portfolio includes digital concerts filmed at Powell Hall on the SLSO's high-definition camera equipment; virtual events for patrons, families, and educators; and a robust online education platform that features curriculum materials, interactive programs, activities, and learning opportunities for all ages.

Since the arrival of Marie-Hélène Bernard as President and CEO in 2015, the SLSO has aligned its mission to



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make music more accessible, while fostering a culture welcoming to all. Building on its momentum, the SLSO serves as a convener of individuals, creators, and ideas, and is committed to building community through compelling and inclusive musical experiences. As it continues its longstanding focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, the SLSO embraces its strengths as a responsive, nimble organization, while investing in partnerships locally and elevating its presence globally. For more information, visit slo.org.

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