



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[March 28, 2024]

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ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL RECORDINGS WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR STÉPHANE DENÈVE AND VIOLINIST JAMES EHNES, FEATURING MUSIC OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN AND JOHN WILLIAMS

Available worldwide April 26 on the Pentatone label, album includes John Williams' Violin Concerto No. 1 and Leonard Bernstein's Serenade after Plato's *Symposium*

(March 28, 2024, St. Louis, MO) – Today, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO) announced the international release of an album featuring music from two of the most accomplished American composers in history: Leonard Bernstein and John Williams. The album marks the inaugural SLSO recordings with Stéphane Denève, The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director.

The album features violinist James Ehnes, a frequent collaborator of the SLSO, performing the solo parts in both Bernstein's *Serenade after Plato's Symposium* and Williams' *Violin Concerto No. 1*.

Stéphane Denève, SLSO Music Director, said, "I could not dream of better partners for this recording of two classic American violin concertos than my dear friend James Ehnes and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. The music in this album holds great personal meaning for me. I was 10 years old when I first saw *E.T.* and discovered the music of John Williams. I can never thank John adequately for his wondrous music and for his precious presence during the rehearsals of this recording. A perfect musical companion, Bernstein's *Serenade* is also a masterwork offering a vast array of emotions. I am so proud of this album and of the virtuosic performances by our musicians and James."

James Ehnes, violinist, said, "Working with such wonderful friends as Stéphane and the artists of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, on music that means so much to me, has been a dream come true. I hope listeners will enjoy the experience of listening as much as we enjoyed the experience of recording these two timeless masterpieces."

Recorded at historic Powell Hall in November 2019 (Williams) and January 2023 (Bernstein), the album is slated for physical and digital release on the Pentatone label on April 26, 2024.

Both works evolve around love: Bernstein's *Serenade* was inspired by musings on love from Plato's *Symposium* while Williams' work was arguably inspired by and eventually dedicated to his deceased wife. By combining these two concert pieces, this album centers the symphonic work of Bernstein and Williams, two composers closely associated with their music for films. Williams was present at the recording of his violin concerto, working together with the SLSO, Denève, and Ehnes.



This SLSO release is the latest in a robust history of recordings that has resulted in nine Grammy Award wins. Most recently, the SLSO, in conjunction with Blue Engine records, released the first commercial recording of Wynton Marsalis' *Swing Symphony* in July 2019. The SLSO won the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance for the Nonesuch release of John Adams' *City Noir*, conducted by former Music Director David Robertson.

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 144th year with the 2023/2024 season and its fifth with [Stéphane Denève, The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director](#). Widely considered one of the leading American orchestras, the Grammy® Award-winning SLSO maintains its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community collaborations—all in service to its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The transformational expansion and renovation of its historic home, Powell Hall, slated to be completed in 2025, builds on the institution's momentum as a civic leader in convening individuals, creators, and ideas, while fostering a culture welcoming to all. Committed to building community through compelling and inclusive musical experiences, the SLSO continues its longstanding focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, embracing its strengths as a responsive, nimble organization, while investing in partnerships locally and elevating its presence globally. For more information, visit slo.org.

About Stéphane Denève

Stéphane Denève is The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Artistic Director of the New World Symphony, and the Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic. He recently concluded terms as Chief Conductor of the Brussels Philharmonic and Principal Guest Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and previously served as Chief Conductor of Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (SWR) and Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Recognized internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, Denève regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. He has a special affinity for the music of his native France, and is a passionate advocate for music of the 21st century.

He is a frequent guest with the New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (with whom he conducted the 2020 Nobel Prize concert), Orchestre national de France, Czech Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, DSO Berlin, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, and Rotterdam Philharmonic.



A graduate and prize-winner of the Paris Conservatoire, Stéphane Denève worked closely in his early career with Sir Georg Solti, Georges Prêtre and Seiji Ozawa. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners, and has worked regularly with young people in programmes such as those of the New World Symphony, Tanglewood Music Center, the Colburn School, the European Union Youth Orchestra, and the Music Academy of the West.

For further information, please visit www.stephanedeneve.com.

About James Ehnes

James Ehnes has established himself as one of the most sought-after violinists on the international stage. Gifted with a rare combination of stunning virtuosity, serene lyricism and an unfaltering musicality, Ehnes is a favorite guest of many of the world's most respected conductors including Ashkenazy, Alsop, Sir Andrew Davis, Denève, Elder, Ivan Fischer, Gardner, Paavo Järvi, Mena, Noseda, Robertson and Runnicles. Ehnes's long list of orchestras includes, amongst others, the Boston, Chicago, London, NHK and Vienna Symphony Orchestras, the Los Angeles, New York, Munich and Czech Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Cleveland, Philadelphia, Philharmonia and DSO Berlin orchestras.

Recent orchestral highlights include the MET Orchestra at Carnegie Hall with Noseda, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig with Shelley, San Francisco Symphony with Janowski, Frankfurt Radio Symphony with Orozco-Estrada, London Symphony with Harding, and Munich Philharmonic with van Zweden, as well as his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Lincoln Center in spring 2019. In 2019/20, Ehnes is Artist in Residence with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, which includes performances of the Elgar Concerto with Luisi, a play/direct programme led by Ehnes, and a chamber music programme. In 2017, Ehnes premiered the Aaron-Jay Kernis Violin Concerto with the Toronto, Seattle and Dallas Symphony Orchestras, and gave further performances of the piece with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Alongside his concerto work, James Ehnes maintains a busy recital schedule. He performs regularly at the Wigmore Hall, Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center Chicago, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Ravinia, Montreux, Chaise-Dieu, the White Nights Festival in St Petersburg, Verbier Festival, Festival de Pâques in Aix, and in 2018 he undertook a recital tour to the Far East, including performances in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. As part of the Beethoven celebrations, Ehnes has been invited to perform the complete cycle of Beethoven Sonatas at the Wigmore Hall throughout 2019/20. Elsewhere Ehnes performs the Beethoven Sonatas at Dresden Music Festival, Prague Spring Festival, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, at Aspen Music Festival (as part of a multi-year residency) and at Bravo Vail Festival during his residency week also including the Violin Concerto and Triple Concerto with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Runnicles. In 2016, Ehnes undertook a cross-Canada recital tour, performing in each of the country's provinces and territories, to celebrate his 40th birthday.



Ehnes began violin studies at the age of five, became a protégé of the noted Canadian violinist Francis Chaplin aged nine, and made his orchestra debut with L'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal aged 13. He continued his studies with Sally Thomas at the Meadowmount School of Music and The Juilliard School, winning the Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music upon his graduation in 1997. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and in 2010 was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada. Ehnes was awarded the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Award in the Instrumentalist category.

James Ehnes plays the “Marsick” Stradivarius of 1715.

About Pentatone

One of the leading classical music labels in the world, Pentatone presents a diverse range of world-class artists, and is dedicated to premium quality productions captured in exceptional sound. The label works together with today and tomorrow's leading artists to provide timeless recordings of core, fringe, and lesser-known repertoire, with Pentatone's uncompromising attention to the best possible quality in artistry, design and recording technology.

The label was founded in the Netherlands in 2001 by three former Philips Classics executives, with the ambition to offer classical music in the highest quality including surround sound. In its first years, Pentatone engaged Mikhail Gorbachev, Bill Clinton, and Sophia Loren in a GRAMMY-winning recording of Prokofiev's Peter & the Wolf (released in Spanish with Antonio Banderas), with Kent Nagano conducting the Russian National Orchestra.

During its first decade, the label released several award-winning recordings with violinist Julia Fischer and several complete cycles: Beethoven's symphonies conducted by Philippe Herreweghe, Beethoven's piano sonatas performed by Mari Kodama, and Bruckner's symphonies under the baton of Marek Janowski.

From 2013, with a new management team, the label focused on embracing the digital era and expanding its repertoire. In recent years, Pentatone has won multiple awards. In 2017, John Corgigliano's The Ghosts of Versailles won Best Opera Recording and Best Engineered Album at the 59th GRAMMY Awards. Two years later, the premiere recording of the Mason Bates opera, The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs, won a GRAMMY for Best Opera Recording. Pentatone was awarded Label of the Year in 2019 by Gramophone Magazine and in 2020 by the International Classical Music Awards. Pentatone's third decade promises to be even more exciting and innovative as we expand our growing and diverse roster of artists, producing the most thrilling recordings in the world.

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