



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND MUSIC DIRECTOR STÉPHANE
DENÈVE WELCOME THE ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY TO FOREST PARK FOR ANNUAL
FREE COMMUNITY CONCERT, SEPTEMBER 17**

Denève leads the SLSO in its annual concert for the community in works by Ludwig van Beethoven, Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, W.C. Handy, W.A. Mozart, John Philip Sousa, Igor Stravinsky, and John Williams, with guest vocalist SSgt MeLan K. Smartt

Celebratory opening of SLSO's 146th season includes food trucks on Art Hill and concludes with fireworks display over Forest Park's Grand Basin

(August 19, 2025, St. Louis, MO) – Led by Music Director Stéphane Denève, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra marks the beginning of its milestone 2025/26 season with the return of its free concert in Forest Park at 7:00pm CDT, Wednesday, September 17, on Art Hill. Since its inaugural Forest Park concert more than 50 years ago, the SLSO has performed for thousands of people each year as a community celebration of music and the kick-off of the SLSO's season.

The celebration serves as a prelude to the reopening of Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center following a two-year transformational expansion and renovation. Opening weekend concerts at the restored venue are slated for September 26-28.

The Forest Park concert serves as a preview for the orchestra's 146th season and Denève's seventh as The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director. Selections include classical favorites by Ludwig van Beethoven, W.A. Mozart, and Igor Stravinsky. In a nod to a narrative thread of American music throughout the SLSO's 25/26 season, the program also includes a tribute to American armed forces veterans, Aaron Copland's iconic *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and George Gershwin's *Girl Crazy* Overture. Denève will be joined by guest vocalist SSgt MeLan K. Smartt—the Regional Band Vocalist at The United States Air Force Band of Mid-America, Scott Air Force Base—for *The Star-Spangled Banner* and "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Another concert highlight includes two selections from the legendary film composer John Williams, whose music can be heard all season with films in concert (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone™*, *Home Alone*), a Concert for Kids (Howl at Powell), a special Playlist spotlight, and a cosmic-themed subscription series in March 2026 pairing Williams' works with those of John Adams and Kevin Puts, masterfully combined by Denève, a close collaborator of the inimitable composer. The festivities end with a show-stopping fireworks display following John Philip Sousa's patriotic anthem *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

The Forest Park concert is performed in memory of longtime SLSO supporter Mary Ann Lee and



endowed in perpetuity by the MacCarthy Foundation. This concert marks the 57th anniversary of the first Forest Park concert in 1968.

Attendees are encouraged to come early, bring chairs and blankets, and enjoy food trucks at the top of Art Hill. Designed to engage families with children, the SLSO's Education and Community Partnerships team will host a family fun zone at the top of Art Hill from 6:00 to 7:00pm, engaging children through musical activities, including music creation and conducting members of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. SLSO staff and volunteers will hand out glow sticks for children to join Denève in conducting the orchestra. Local vendors at the concert will include Angie Burger, The Best Wurst, Blues Fired Pizza, Cajun Seduction, Falafel Saha Food Truck, The Fire and Ice Cream Truck, Go Gyro Go, Grace Meat + 3, Hog Call BBQ, Holy Crepe, Honey Bee Tea, The MOObile Smash Burger Truck, Picture Perfect Panini, Ron Ron's Black Fried Rice, Scoops of Joy, STL BarKeep, Takozz Real Mexican Food, The Popcorn Bar, Urban Chestnut Brewing Company, Widdy's Cheesesteaks, WokoTaco Food Truck. Food and drink vendors will be available starting at 5:00pm.

Audiences can sign up to receive updates about the concert, including information about food trucks, parking, and shuttles, at slo.org/forestpark.

Following the opening of the season in Forest Park, Denève leads the SLSO's first concerts at Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center, September 26-28. To celebrate the reopening of the iconic civic treasure, the SLSO will perform a trio of celebratory fanfares representing the past, present, and future—including the world premiere of James Lee III's *Fanfare for Universal Hope*. The program also includes the world premiere of *House of Tomorrow* by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts—the SLSO's Composer in Residence during the 25/26 season. The song cycle features acclaimed mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato. Richard Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* concludes the program. Each of the opening weekend concerts includes special events. Tickets for the concerts and add-on events are on sale now.

Tickets for all 25/26 season concerts are on sale now and can be purchased at slo.org or by calling the SLSO Box Office at 314-534-1700.

Calendar listing:

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Stéphane Denève open its 2025/26 season with a free community concert on Forest Park's Art Hill at 7:00pm Wednesday, September 17. The annual concert—featuring classical music, film music, and patriotic tunes—concludes with a festive fireworks display.

Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 7:00pm CDT
Art Hill at Forest Park, 1 Fine Arts Drive, St. Louis, Missouri, 63110

Stéphane Denève, conductor



SSgt MeLan K. Smartt, vocals

John Stafford Smith *The Star-Spangled Banner*

Arranged by Adam Maness

J. Rosamund Johnson “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Arranged by Hale Smith

Aaron Copland *Fanfare for the Common Man*

Ludwig van Beethoven Excerpt from Symphony No. 7

W.A. Mozart *Le nozze di Figaro* Overture

Igor Stravinsky Excerpts from *The Firebird* Suite (1919 version)

George Gershwin *Girl Crazy* Overture

Arranged Don Rose

W.C. Handy *St. Louis Blues* March

Arranged Richard Hayman

Various *Armed Forces Salute*

Arranged by Hayman/Kessler

John Williams *Liberty Fanfare*

John Williams Main Title from *Star Wars* Suite

John Philip Sousa *The Stars and Stripes Forever*

This concert is performed in memory of Mary Ann Lee.

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 146th year with the 2025/26 season and its seventh 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 project that expands and renovates the orchestra's historic home, Powell Hall—designed by Snøhetta and creating the Jack C. Taylor Music Center—will be completed in September 2025. This milestone builds on the institution's momentum as a civic leader in convening individuals, creators, and ideas, while fostering a culture welcoming to all. For more information, visit slo.org.

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