



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STÉPHANE DENÈVE AND THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANNOUNCE FIVE NEW FULL-TIME MUSICIANS**

**Appointments made to Associate Principal Clarinet; contrabassoon;
bass trombone; and first and second violin section**

(September 9, 2025, St. Louis, MO) – The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Stéphane Denève announce the appointments of five new full-time musicians, as the SLSO begins its 2025/26 season, the orchestra's 146th.

The SLSO's 25/26 season begins on September 17 with the annual free community concert in Forest Park. The season serves as a milestone moment for the orchestra with the reopening of Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center following a transformational, two-year expansion and renovation project. Opening Weekend at the venue is September 26–28.

The SLSO's new musicians are:

Robert Walker, Associate Principal and E-flat Clarinet, joins the SLSO after serving as acting second clarinet for the 24/25 season. Before joining the SLSO, Walker was Principal Clarinet of the Pacific Symphony and formerly the Second/E-flat Clarinetist of the Louisville Orchestra. He has also held temporary principal posts with the Grant Park Orchestra and the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra and made guest appearances with the symphony orchestras of Cleveland, Nashville, and Sarasota. Originally from Queens, New York, Walker teaches privately and has served as the Valade Fellow at Interlochen Arts Camp. He holds degrees from the University of Southern California and The Juilliard School.

Walker fills the chair held by Diana Haskell, who retired at the end of the 24/25 season.

Ellen Connors, Bassoon and Contrabassoon, a Michigan native, was appointed to the SLSO's contrabassoon position in 2024. She also serves as Principal Bassoon of the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in Columbus, Ohio, a position she has held since 2011. In the past she served as Principal Bassoon of the Knoxville Symphony, the Sarasota Opera and the Artosphere Festival Orchestra. Additionally, she has performed at the Sun Valley Music Festival since 2011. A new music advocate, she has appeared with Alarm Will Sound and in 2019 was Principal Bassoon of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Connors holds degrees from Rice University and Yale University.



Christopher Bassett, Bass Trombone, returns to the SLSO, where he served as a one-year replacement musician in the 22/23 and 23/24 seasons. Most recently, he served as the bass trombonist of the San Francisco Symphony, an appointment made by Esa-Pekka Salonen. A native of Oceanside, California, he obtained degrees from the New England Conservatory and Columbus State University and served as a Tanglewood Music Center fellow in 2016. Passionate about working with the next generation of musicians, he is a co-founder of the Southwest Trombone Conference and serves on the faculty of the prestigious San Francisco Conservatory of Music. An active soloist and chamber musician, he has performed internationally and is a member of the STL Trombones, a chamber group of SLSO trombonists.

He fills the chair held by Gerry Pagano, who retired at the end of the 21/22 season.

Miyu Kubo, first violin, a native of Tokyo, joins the SLSO following her time at The Juilliard School, where she earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees and was a prolific scholarship recipient. A laureate of several competitions, she served as concertmaster during The Juilliard School orchestra's Kennedy Center tour and was concertmaster for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at the Tanglewood Music Festival season finale. As a soloist, she made her debut at Carnegie Hall while in high school. She is also a committed chamber musician, performing in several prestigious academies.

Jessie Chen, second violin, first joined the SLSO in 2022 as a replacement section violinist. A Los Angeles native, he began studying the violin at age five and received his bachelor's degree in computer science at Princeton University, before returning to music and receiving his Master's degree at The Juilliard School. He has appeared as a soloist with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Culver City Chamber Orchestra, and Princeton University Orchestra and regularly performs with the Chamber Music Society of St. Louis.

Appointments to the violin section fill positions vacated by retired musicians.

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.



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

Stéphane Denève : Music Director

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