



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA INVITES ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY TO ANNUAL FOREST PARK CONCERT, A FREE COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE LED BY MUSIC DIRECTOR STÉPHANE DENÈVE, SEPTEMBER 16

Denève leads the orchestra and members of its two resident choruses in music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, Carl Orff, Ottorino Respighi, John Philip Sousa, and John Williams in the SLSO's annual season commencement concert, a free community event on Forest Park's Art Hill

Celebratory opening of SLSO's 147th season includes food trucks and family activities and concludes with fireworks display over Forest Park's Grand Basin

(August 11, 2026, St. Louis, MO) - Led by Music Director Stéphane Denève, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra kicks off its 147th season with the return of its free community concert on Art Hill in Forest Park on Wednesday, September 16 at 7:00pm CDT. This tradition began more than 50 years ago and continues to bring the St. Louis community together to celebrate the power of music and the beginning of a new SLSO season.

The celebration serves as a prelude to the second season back at Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center, which re-opened in September 2025 following a two-year transformational expansion and renovation. The opening weekend of classical concerts at the restored venue are slated for September 26–27.

The Forest Park concert offers a glimpse into the orchestra's 147th season and Denève's ninth as The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director. Selections span beloved American works and orchestral classics by George Gershwin, Ludwig van Beethoven, Leonard Bernstein, and Aaron Copland. Denève leads the orchestra in a selection from Ottorino Respighi's celebratory tone poem *Pines of Rome*, featured in the opening weekend performances as part of an Italian-inspired program, as well as an excerpt from Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 6. Music for orchestra with chorus features prominently in the program in a nod to the 50th anniversary season of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. Members of the Symphony Chorus and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, two ensembles under the SLSO umbrella, join the orchestra for selections including Carl Orff's *O Fortuna* from *Carmina Burana*, a selection from George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, *Simple Gifts* from Aaron Copland's *Old American Songs*, and selections from the John Williams' score to *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*. Another concert highlight showcases themes from *Star Wars* by acclaimed film composer John Williams, whose works will be celebrated throughout the 26/27 season in the



SLSO's Films in Concert presentations of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™*, *Hook*, and *Star Wars: A New Hope*. The evening concludes with John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, followed by an extraordinary fireworks display lighting up the sky over the Grand Basin.

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 58th 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 6:00–7:00pm, engaging children through musical activities, including a musical scavenger hunt and a conducting station with members of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Local vendors at the concert will include Angie Burger, The Best Wurst, Blues Fired Pizza, Bougie Bites, Cajun Seduction, Dulce Pop STL, Fire & Ice Cream, Go Gyro Go, Grace Chicken & Fish, Hog Call BBQ, Honey Bee Tea, The MOObile, Picture Perfect Panini, The Popcorn Bar, Ramblin Rounds, Scoops of Joy, Steve's Hot Dogs, Takozz Mexican, Widdy's Cheesesteaks, Woko Taco, and Zacchi Food Truck. Cold drinks, including bottled water, soft drinks, beer, wine, and seltzers will also be available. Food and drink vendors will be available starting at 5:00pm.

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 18–20, with performances of the score to *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™* while the film plays overhead. The opening classical weekend, September 26–27, leads audiences through a musical journey of Italy with Hector Berlioz's *Roman Carnival Overture*, Franz Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 featuring Grammy-winning pianist Yefim Bronfman, Andrea Tarrodi's *Liguria*, and Ottorino Respighi's *Pines of Rome*.

Tickets for all 2026/27 season concerts are on sale now and can be purchased at slo.org or by calling the SLSO Box Office at 314-534-1700.

Forest Park Concert

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Stéphane Denève open its 2026/27 season with a free community concert on Forest Park's Art Hill at 7:00pm Wednesday, September 16. The annual concert—featuring members of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus—closes with a festive fireworks display.

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 7:00pm CST

Art Hill at Forest Park, 1 Fine Arts Drive, St. Louis, Missouri, 63110

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Members of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus | Erin Freeman, director



Members of the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus | Kevin McBeth, director

John Stafford Smith	<i>"The Star-Spangled Banner"</i>
J. Rosamund Johnson / arr. Holland	<i>"Lift Every Voice and Sing"</i>
Ottorino Respighi	<i>The Pines of the Villa Borghese from Pines of Rome</i>
Ludwig van Beethoven	<i>Allegro from Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"</i>
Aaron Copland	<i>Simple Gifts from Old American Songs</i>
Carl Orff	<i>O Fortuna from Carmina Burana</i>
George Gershwin	<i>Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way from Porgy and Bess</i>
Leonard Bernstein	<i>"Mambo" from West Side Story</i>
Various / arr. Hayman/Kessler	<i>Armed Forces Salute</i>
John Williams	<i>March of the Resistance from Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>
John Williams	<i>Battle of the Heroes from Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith</i>
John Williams	<i>Throne Room and End Title from Star Wars Suite</i>
John Philip Sousa	<i>The Stars and Stripes Forever</i>

Performed in memory of Mary Ann Lee.

About the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

Celebrated as one of today's most exciting, innovative, and enduring orchestras, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the nation's second oldest, marking its 147th year with the 2026/27 season. The visionary and heartfelt approach of Stéphane Denève, The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director, anchors more than 400 extraordinary artists across four ensembles.

A leading American orchestra, the Grammy Award-winning SLSO is dedicated to its mission of enriching lives through the power of music, fostering a vibrant and connected community. The SLSO is committed to making music more accessible to all, furthered by the September 2025 reopening of its expanded and renovated home, the Jack C. Taylor Music Center, with historic Powell Hall at its heart. A cornerstone of the St. Louis region, the SLSO partners with more than 150 community organizations to deepen music access.

The SLSO shapes the orchestra of the future through its commitment to integrity, innovation, collaboration, inclusion, and responsiveness, elevating St. Louis as a global destination.

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