ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

NOTED

Program Book



26/27

147th Season

Nov 2026





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Nov 2026





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From the President



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Welcome to Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center. As we look forward to Thanksgiving, we're grateful to you for joining us for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's 147th season. We're dedicated to creating a space where everyone can experience live orchestral music, and we're delighted you're here.

Our November programming elevates St. Louis' status as a music destination with remarkable SLSO debuts from artists like Daniil Trifonov (Nov 6–8) and Himari (Nov 28–29). The Black Jacket Symphony performs the music of Led Zeppelin (Nov 18), and St. Louis' own John Goodman joins us to narrate Peter Boyer's *American Mosaic* in a program that also features the US Naval Academy Glee Club (Nov 20–21). As we celebrate the St. Louis Symphony Chorus' 50th anniversary throughout the 26/27 season, the ensemble demonstrates its versatility by performing works by Mendelssohn and Stravinsky (Nov 14–15).

The SLSO's education programs advance our commitment to making music accessible for all by engaging young people and fostering a lifelong passion for music. Since 2017, our beloved Extra Credit concert has honored music educators' vital role in shaping the next generation of musicians. Our first-ever Extra Credit choral concert (Nov 1) invites choral educators to perform alongside members of the SLSO, the SLSC, and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus.

We also welcome the return of our chamber music series with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation (Nov 10) and The Sheldon Concert Hall and Galleries (Nov 19). These deeply valued partnerships enhance our programming and showcase our musicians' exceptional artistry in intimate performance spaces.

Thank you for advancing our mission and enabling us to champion the power of music. We invite you to join Friends of Music or our Giving Circles by visiting slso.org/donate. Enjoy the performance!

Marie-Hélène Bernard
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We're glad you're here! A few tips to help you enjoy your visit to Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center:

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Stéphane Denève

The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director



© Jon Gitchoff

Known for his visionary storytelling and heartfelt interpretations, Stéphane Denève, The Joseph and Emily Rauh Pulitzer Music Director, joined the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in September 2018.

Throughout his remarkable tenure, Stéphane has shaped his music directorship around creating extraordinary experiences that give an authentic voice to music. An expert with repertoire across genre and time, he has cultivated specific recognition for his interpretation of French, American, vocal, and operatic music. Through thoughtful and innovative programming, he maintains an enthusiasm for music and composers of today. A gifted communicator and educator, he is committed to inspiring the next generation of musicians and listeners, as well as nurturing the SLSO's role as a creative leader for the St. Louis community and making orchestral music accessible to all.

Recognized internationally for the exceptional quality of his performances and programming, he regularly appears at major concert venues with the world's greatest orchestras and soloists. In addition to his role in St. Louis, he is the Artistic Director of the New World Symphony (Miami) and the Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic. He has held leadership positions at the Brussels Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Since his first visit to St. Louis in 2003, Stéphane has charmed audiences with his wit, warmth, and genuine passion for music and the St. Louis region. He is shaping the future of the SLSO through his appointments of artistic leaders and one-third of the orchestra to date, advanced audience-building initiatives with new happy hour concerts, and made music more accessible to the community through cross-artistic collaborations with partnering St. Louis arts organizations. He has welcomed music lovers to SLSO performances in St. Louis, at universities throughout the Midwest, and in some of Europe's most-respected concert halls.



© Virginia Harold

About the SLSO

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.



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St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

147th Season 2026/27

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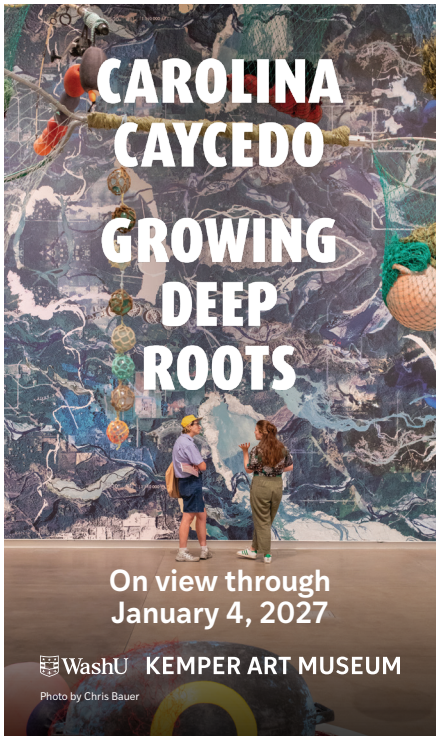
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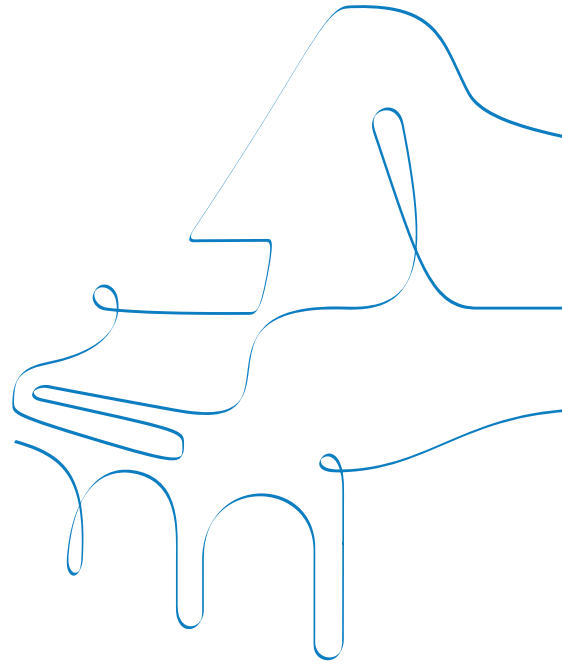
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A Choral Celebration
50 Years of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus

By Iain Shaw

The St. Louis Symphony Chorus and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato performing the world premiere of Kevin Puts' *House of Tomorrow*, commissioned for the reopening of Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center in September 2025.

© Virginia Harold

The 2026/27 season marks the 50th anniversary of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, with the SLSC ready to demonstrate its radiant sound and versatility across a variety of programs and other celebratory events throughout the year ahead. As the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra honors the SLSC's artistic achievement, legacy, and impact across the past half-century, Chorus director Erin Freeman and longtime member Brian Pezza shared a few insights on what makes the Chorus such an enduring part of the SLSO.

A Proud Legacy

Founded in 1976 by then-SLSO Music Director Jerzy Semkow, the SLSC is primarily a volunteer ensemble of musicians of all ages and musical backgrounds from throughout the St. Louis region. Together with the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, the SLSC is an equal partner with the orchestra, regularly performing choral-orchestral repertoire from across genre and time, from liturgical music to orchestral masterworks.

Several generations of Chorus members have performed alongside the SLSO, including world premieres of works by composers like Meredith Monk and Kevin Puts, film and holiday concerts, and landmark achievements such as the Chorus' Carnegie Hall performance of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in 2013. "That was definitely the highlight of my musical career," said Pezza, who joined the SLSC shortly after relocating to St. Louis in 2008. Audiences at Powell Hall have come to expect and appreciate the exceptional standards of artistry that have earned the Chorus four Grammy Award nominations to date.

The Anniversary Season Begins

The SLSC's anniversary season gets underway with two very different concerts. On November 1, the SLSO's Extra Credit concert expands its scope with a special edition focused on choral educators. Since 2017, Extra Credit has honored the vital role educators play in cultivating new musicians and music lovers by inviting music teachers to perform with SLSO musicians. The Extra Credit Choral Concert welcomes choral educators to perform with members of not only the SLSO but also the SLSC and the IN UNISON Chorus.

Later this month, the SLSC joins the SLSO and guest conductor David Afkham for performances of Felix Mendelssohn's beautiful setting of *Psalm 114 (When Israel out of Egypt Came)* and Igor Stravinsky's daring *Symphony of Psalms*. These concerts will offer a taste of the rest of the SLSC's season, which includes performances of works like



During the 26/27 season, the St. Louis Symphony Chorus will perform a range of works across genre and time by composers including Joseph Haydn, Gustav Mahler, Felix Mendelssohn, Francis Poulenc, and Maurice Ravel.

© Joan Fisher



© Jon Gitchoff

The SLSC is a predominantly volunteer-based ensemble, with members coming from a variety of walks of life.

Maurice Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (The Child and the Spells), Joseph Haydn's *Missa in angustiis* (Mass for Troubled Times), Francis Poulenc's *Gloria*, and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 3.

Erin Freeman, now in her third season as Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, said the programming itself sends an important message. By weaving the ensemble into a series of concerts throughout the season, rather than one or two signature performances, the SLSO demonstrates that "the Chorus is an important piece of the entire fabric of the organization," Freeman said.

Dedicated Volunteers

One distinguishing detail of the Symphony Chorus—and its counterpart, the IN UNISON Chorus—is that it is largely volunteer-based. Members are teachers, lawyers, business leaders, students, healthcare workers, and retirees. When they gather at Powell Hall for rehearsals on Tuesday evenings, many of them are coming straight from work, carrying scores marked up at kitchen tables and in living rooms across the region.

"You have a group of people who, from nine to five, are doing something completely different," Freeman said. "This is their outlet. They take it seriously, and they devote themselves to it." For Chorus members, Freeman added, "Tuesday night is the moment where they turn off their cell phones and dive headfirst into these difficult works."

Generations of Singers

Members have to regularly audition to retain their place in the Chorus, with the next generation of members knocking at the door. Pezza's 16-year-old son, Graham, is one of the most recent recruits. "We were at a concert, and he saw that there were auditions for the Symphony Chorus and just said, 'Can I audition? Is there an age limit?'" Pezza said. "I was very surprised, but I said, 'Just sign up and see what happens.' He got ready and worked on it, and apparently did a great job."

The ultimate test for members of the SLSO's choruses comes when they take the stage alongside the SLSO. "When we get out there, we feel every bit of the obligation to the performance," Pezza said. "We feel the same commitment to the vision of the conductor."

Building on the Legacy

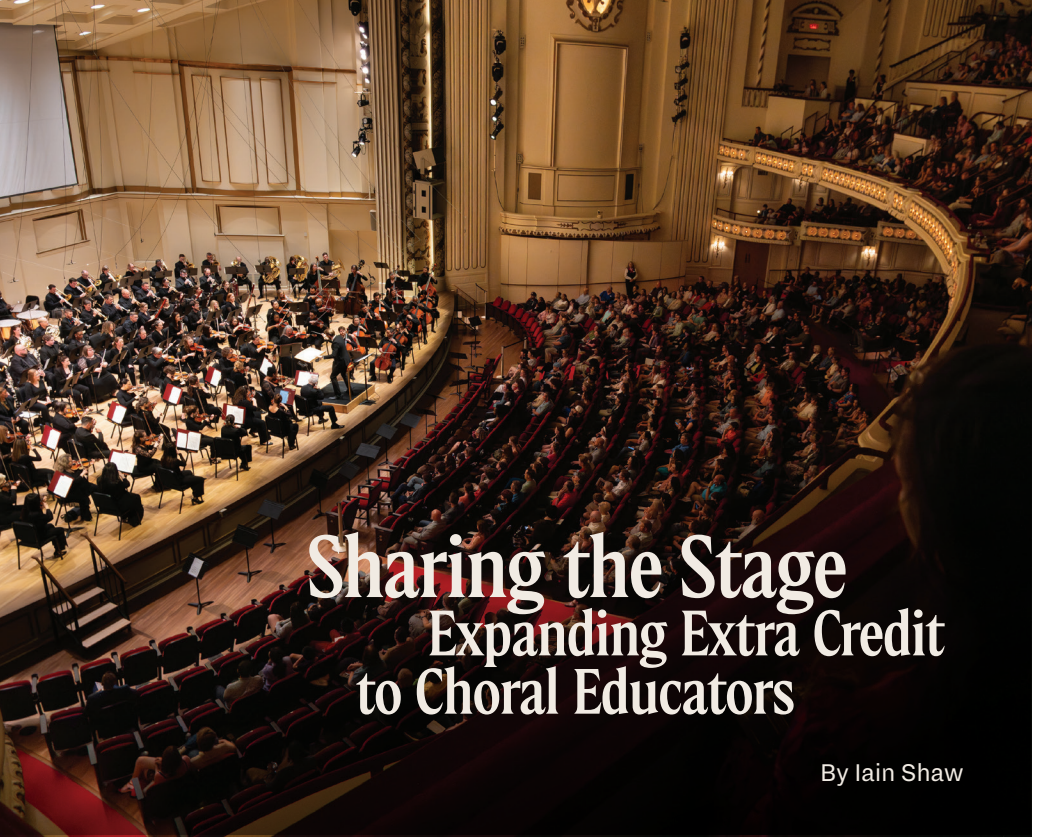
Freeman said that the SLSC's artistry is characterized by an instinct to use every performance and every piece of music to inform what the ensemble tackles next. "I think it's really exciting to be able to build on what others before me have created," Freeman said. "My goal is to look at everything we have over the season and use that to make us a better Chorus for the next season.... It's always about leveling up."

Freeman is also keen to acknowledge the legacy of those who came before. The SLSC's 26/27 season performances are not just the work of the more than 100 musicians of the Chorus but the cumulative result of the efforts of every singer who has ever contributed to the ensemble, building a community, a culture, and a legacy that has helped to shape the SLSO over the past half-century—and for generations to come.



© Phillip Hamer

Now in her third season as Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, Erin Freeman said her focus is always on taking the Chorus to the next level.



Sharing the Stage
Expanding Extra Credit to Choral Educators

By Iain Shaw

The Extra Credit Choral Concert on November 1 invites choral educators to perform side-by-side with musicians from the SLSO, St. Louis Symphony Chorus, and St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus.

© Jon Gitchoff

On November 1, almost 100 choral educators will step into a role their students rarely get to see. Rather than teaching vocal technique or conducting rehearsals, choir directors and educators from across the St. Louis region will perform alongside members of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Chorus, and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus at Powell Hall at the Jack C. Taylor Music Center for the SLSO's inaugural Extra Credit Choral Concert.

The Ripple Effect

Launched in 2017, Extra Credit has become one of the SLSO's most distinctive education and advocacy programs, but until now the initiative has been focused on instrumental educators. Participating music educators are invited to take part in a rehearsal where they play side-by-side with SLSO musicians and conductors. After the rehearsal, the ensemble performs at a pay-what-you-wish concert at Powell Hall for an audience that includes hundreds of students, family, and friends of participating educators, as well as other teachers and school administrators.

"At its heart, Extra Credit is an advocacy initiative for school music education," said Maureen Byrne, the SLSO's Vice President of Education and Community Programs. Extra Credit's impact is founded upon the SLSO's ability to build productive relationships with teachers. These connections are grounded in respect and trust. The orchestra sees educators as partners, champions, and connectors whose influence extends far beyond a single classroom.

"A relationship with one educator can become a relationship with an entire classroom, school, choir, band program, orchestra program, or district," Byrne said. "When a teacher has a positive relationship with the SLSO, that relationship can extend into the classroom and ultimately to thousands of students over the course of a career."

The potential "multiplier effect" Byrne talks about is evident, even in the short term. An average of around 100 educators participate in each Extra Credit concert. Collectively, those educators teach more than 20,000 students annually through their work in schools and communities. Most participants come from the St. Louis area, but many have also come from other parts of Missouri, some even traveling from as far away as Florida and Texas.



SLSO musicians and music educators in rehearsal for the most recent Extra Credit concert in April 2026.

© Jon Gitchoff

Educators as Musicians

Michelle Byrd, the SLSO's Manager of IN UNISON Programs, has long championed the idea of a choral edition of Extra Credit. She believes extending the program to include choral educators will prove to have a similar impact to that of the instrumental Extra Credit concerts. "This is a chance to tell vocal music educators, 'We see you,'" said Byrd.

Expanding Extra Credit to include choral educators acknowledges a unique asset within the SLSO: its two resident choruses. Members of the Symphony Chorus and the IN UNISON Chorus will partner with educators during the Extra Credit Choral Concert, but it's worth noting that a number of members of both choruses are educators themselves.



© Joan Fisher

St. Louis Symphony Chorus Director Erin Freeman and St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus Director Kevin McBeth will conduct the Extra Credit Choral Concert.

By inviting educators onto the stage with the SLSO's musicians—whether members of the orchestra itself or either of the resident choruses—Extra Credit is intentional about highlighting teachers as performing musicians. "It's a chance for students to see what their teachers do beyond the classroom and understand that music doesn't have to end after high school or college," Byrd said.

Sarah Cohea, an alto and a teacher at Discovery Ridge Elementary in O'Fallon, Missouri, said that participating in Extra Credit would give her an opportunity to model an important value for her students. "Participating in music performances can continue through your entire life," she said.

When young musicians see their teachers performing, they see them living out the same skills and habits they impress upon their students day after day. "They see that their teachers are not asking them to do something that they are not doing themselves," Byrd added.



© Virginia Harold

Members of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus performing together at the SLSO's annual Forest Park Concert on September 16, 2026.

That message has a personal resonance for Byrd. She talks about a choir teacher who was an inspiration to her in middle school, yet she never saw that teacher perform until she was an adult. "I know for sure there are educators within the IN UNISON Chorus [for example], and their students hear about them performing, but they haven't seen them do it," Byrd said.

A Platform for Teachers—and Students

Extra Credit also puts the spotlight on music educators in a way that can elevate their profile within school districts. That can be vital to sustaining administrative support for music education. "The teacher's artistry becomes visible beyond the music classroom," said Byrne. "The SLSO is publicly signaling that the people who teach music deserve to be recognized not only for what they teach but for who they are as musicians."

"Other instrumental music educators from my district have participated in the Extra Credit program for band and orchestra teachers," said Kim Carson, an alto and a teacher from Hoech Middle School in St. Ann. "I have enjoyed the concerts and heard great things about the experience and am excited about the opportunity to participate."

For Byrne, the larger purpose remains unchanged. "By intentionally welcoming choral directors into the SLSO's orbit, we can strengthen connections between the orchestra and the broader school vocal community," she said. "Perhaps most importantly, we can help their students see the SLSO as a place where they belong, too."



Ron Bolte, Assistant Stage Manager for Sound (left), and Adam Sheppard, Stage Manager, move new front of house audio equipment into place on Powell Hall's orchestra level.

© Eric Dundon

Behind the Sound

New Technology Brings Greater Clarity to Powell Hall

By Eric Dundon

For St. Louis Symphony Orchestra concerts, Powell Hall itself acts as another instrument in the ensemble. For Music Director Stéphane Denève, being in the hall "feels like you are in a Greek amphitheater, like there is something mysterious carrying the sound so beautifully to somewhere so far away."

But some performances ask the hall—and the SLSO's production team—to do something different.

Popular artists, amplified specials, and other programs can bring vocalists, electric instruments, keyboards, and dozens of microphones to the stage. To meet those increasingly sophisticated demands, the SLSO has invested in a new front-of-house audio system and onstage monitor setup designed to give engineers greater control and audiences clearer, more detailed sound.

"It's not always about volume," said Ron Bolte, the SLSO's Assistant Stage Manager for Sound. "Most of the time in this hall, it's more about clarity and articulation."

In an amplified performance, microphones can capture more than their intended source. A vocalist's mic, for example, might also pick up nearby drums or the brass instruments in the back row. The new equipment offers significantly more advanced processing, allowing engineers to better isolate individual sounds and create a cleaner mix.

For audiences, Bolte said, that means much clearer and more articulate sound for amplified concerts like the SLSO's Powell Hall Presents series, which showcase non-orchestral performances by rock groups, jazz ensembles, and more.

The upgrade also transforms what musicians hear.

During many amplified concerts, an engineer stationed to the side of the stage operates a separate monitor console. While the front-of-house engineer shapes the sound heard by the audience, the monitor engineer creates mixes specifically for the performers—allowing a singer, bassist, or other musician to hear the combination of instruments they need through an earpiece or monitor.

The SLSO's previous equipment could reach its capacity as increasingly complex productions required more inputs and individualized stereo mixes. The new system provides considerably more flexibility, allowing musicians to receive more precisely tailored mixes while giving the front-of-house engineer independent control over the audience experience.

The impact of the new equipment won't be limited to amplified concerts. The audio system supports spoken introductions, preconcert lectures, and other presentations throughout the season, meaning the words spoken or sung on stage won't get lost among the sounds of the orchestra.

For Stage Manager Adam Sheppard, the upgrade can be summarized more simply: "We've caught up with the times."

The result is technology audiences may not immediately notice—which, in many ways, is the point. Whether helping a guest artist hear exactly what they need onstage or allowing a voice to emerge cleanly above an ensemble, the new system is designed to make the technology recede, enabling the performance to shine.



Meet the Musicians

Ellen Connors **Bassoon and Contrabassoon**

When did you realize you wanted music to play such a big part in your life?

I was six or seven when I started picturing a career in music, though I didn't decide what kind of musician I would be till much later. I spent loads of time singing as a young person.

What do you love most about your instrument?

I love the color that the contrabassoon adds to the orchestra. In the hands of the right composer, it can completely alter the impact of a moment.

What's the most unusual place where you've played your instrument?

I once played for a group of college students in Mongolia. They weren't music students; they were studying English. They had a pretty unusual lesson that day.

What has been your most memorable performance since joining the SLSO?

I haven't been a member of the orchestra for very long, but last year's Mahler's Fifth was very exciting. I've played the piece many times, but those performances were a special thrill.

What do you love about the SLSO?

I feel privileged to play in a group where the level of artistry is so outstanding. It's such a pleasure to share the stage with my colleagues.

Ellen Connors joined the SLSO in the 2025/26 season. Learn more and explore our Meet the Musicians video interviews at **slso.org/videos**.



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Donor Spotlight



Gary Werner

A love of music is often passed down between generations, and this is certainly a familiar tale among St. Louis Symphony Orchestra patrons.

Some of Gary Werner's first classical music memories were formed listening to vinyl LPs on his parents' console stereo in the 1960s. The score for NBC's World War II naval documentary, *Victory at Sea*, was an early favorite, but Werner's tastes would expand to absorb music from a vast array of composers, eras, and styles. His musical explorations also led him to the SLSO, where he began volunteering in the 1990s. "The symphony has given me many wonderful evenings, meaningful experiences, and friendships over the years," he said.

Attending SLSO concerts affirmed Werner's lifelong conviction that music has the power to bring us together. "I love the way the symphony brings people together through music," he said. "It isn't limited to classical music, it welcomes jazz, Broadway, and other artists and gives people many different ways to experience music together."

Maximizing access to music is an essential part of that story, Werner said. "I think the symphony does an excellent job of bringing people into the hall and making music accessible to everyone," he added.

By joining the SLSO's Legacy Circle, Werner has planned to include a gift in his estate that will enable future generations to enjoy the power of music. "There is simply nothing like hearing a live orchestra," Werner said.

"Including the symphony in my legacy is a way for me to help ensure that the organization and the experience of live orchestral music will continue for future generations."

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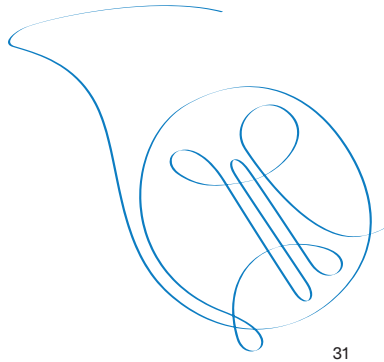
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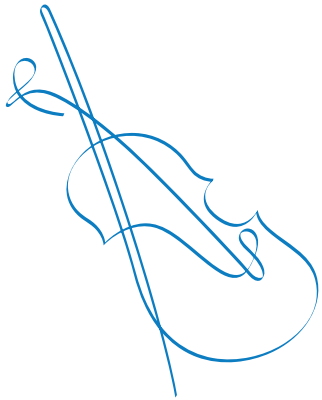
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Find out more

J. Rosamond Johnson (1873–1954) Arranged by Roland Carter	**"Lift Every Voice and Sing"** Kevin McBeth, conductor
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Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947)	**"How Can I Keep from Singing"** Kevin McBeth, conductor

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Traditional Arranged by Rosephanye Powell	**"Keep Yo' Lamps"** Kevin McBeth, conductor
Brandon Williams (b. 1981) Orchestrated by David Gill	**"Fierce Love"** Erin Freeman, conductor
Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens (b. 1960 and b. 1948) Arranged by Mark Hayes	**"Make Them Hear You" from *Ragtime*** Erin Freeman, conductor

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Artists



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Erin Freeman

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus
AT&T Foundation Chair

Erin Freeman was named the Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus in July 2024. A versatile and engaging conductor and artistic leader, she maintains a dynamic international presence through guest engagements and three additional major leadership posts: Artistic Director of The City Choir of Washington and Wintergreen Music, and Principal Conductor of the Richmond Ballet.

Equally at home on symphonic, choral, and ballet podiums, Freeman's repertoire ranges from J.S. Bach and Vaughan Williams to ballet masterworks like *Giselle* and *Firebird*, alongside world premieres by composers such as Kevin Puts, Gilda Lyons, and Alex Berko. Guest credits include the New York City Ballet, Detroit Symphony, and Buffalo Philharmonic, with appearances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Vienna's Musikverein, and the Kennedy Center. Her 2026/27 season features landmark anniversaries for the SLSC (50th) and City Choir of Washington (20th), productions with the Richmond and Toledo Ballets, and Britten's *War Requiem* with Berkshire Choral International.



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Kevin McBeth

Director of the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus

Kevin McBeth was appointed Director of the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus in 2011. He is also the Director of Worship Arts at Manchester United Methodist Church in suburban St. Louis. A published composer and author, he also serves as music editor for the SLSO IN UNISON Chorus Choral Series with MorningStar Music. He is a featured author in the book *Choral Reflections: Insights from American Choral Conductor-Teachers*, edited by Brandon Williams.

McBeth has served on state, division, and national boards of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and is Past-President of the Missouri ACDA. He has served as a guest lecturer at numerous prestigious schools, has conducted concerts at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, and led festival choir tours to the UK, Ireland, and Italy. McBeth appears regularly with the SLSO for specials and education concerts, and serves as the conductor for St. Louis' newly formed Pop! Pop! Pop! Orchestra.

MUSIC EDUCATOR GUEST PERFORMERS

Graeme Allen
Kehrs Mill Elementary

Joshua Allen
Poplar Bluff High School

Rebekah Anthonis
John Weldon Elementary

McKenna Askew
Maplecrest Elementary

Chelsea Ayres
Oakville High School

Brandy Beanblossom
Lafayette Preparatory Academy

Katelyn Bilin
Grandview R-2

Heather Blackwell
Holman Middle School

Eliza Bock
Heartland Christian Academy

Dani Boulanger
Father McGivney Catholic High School

Anna Brummell
McKinley Classical Leadership Academy

Julie Burnette
Jury Elementary

Whitney Cairns
Saeger Middle School

Pamela Cajka
Francis Howell High School

Kim Carson
Hoech Middle School

Emily Chrostoski
St. Margaret of Scotland

Erin Clevenger
Bierbaum Elementary School

Sarah Cohea
Discovery Ridge Elementary

Ella Crader
Orchard Drive Elementary

Elizabeth Curtiss
Dardenne Elementary

Kelly Damann
Illini Central High School

Sarah Dobson
Bryan Middle School

Marsha Etzkorn
Saint Mary Catholic School

Robin Evans
W.J. Zahnow Elementary School

Tim Fain
Poplar Bluff Middle School

Rose Fischer
Forsyth School

Karey Fitzpatrick
Parkway West High

Liz Foor
Academy of the Sacred Heart

Jenna Fredrickson
Immanuel Lutheran School - Wentzville

Katie Gore
Hazelwood Central Middle School

India Grant
All Saints Academy - St. Norbert Catholic School

Rachel Hahn
Immanuel Lutheran School

Terra Jo Haley
Hickey Elementary

Olivia Howard
Francis Howell Middle School

Marnise Ivory
Wentzville Middle School

Emma Jarrett
Bowling Green High School

Ross Jones
Mascoutah High School

Lisa Jones
Victory Christian Academy

David Justice
Althoff Catholic High School

Karen Kaibel
Parkway Southwest Middle

Angela Kelton
Glenridge Elementary

Nicole Keys
Smithton CSSD 130

Dasol Kim
Coverdell Elementary School

Pat Klick
Nerinx Hall

Mandy Koch
Ritenour Middle School

Jodi Kratzer
East High School

Sarah Krus
Hancock Place Elementary

Sidney Ladwig
Lindenwood University

April Lowe Whitehead
Gateway Science Academy-South

Erin Luther
Southern Boon Primary School

Sarah Maguigad
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Ian Marshall
Hazelwood East High School

Shannon Martin
Troy Middle School

Leslie McCorkle
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Victoria Carmichael
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Rhonda Collins Coates
Annette Officer Elementary
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Janet Davis
Zacheriah Davis
Jaylen Davis-Vaughn
Webster Groves High School
Lucy Debro
Hazelwood North Middle School
Maggie Dorsey
Carole Dula-Bell
Lisha Ellis
Dan Fink
Kirkwood High School
Bekah Ford
Lea Luecking Frost

Ousmane Gaye
Mason German
Eugene Gilliam
Carlea Halverson
Shenandoah Elementary
Gerica Harris
Kara Heeb
Carol Henley
Natalie Hill
Don Hutcherson
Kristin Jacobs
Matthew Jellinek
Lauren Johns
Alexandar Johnson
Normandy High School
Jahlil Johnson
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Music educators and SLSO musicians perform together at the Extra Credit concert in April 2026.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nov 6 Fri 7:30pm
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Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky

Stéphane Denève, conductor
Daniil Trifonov, piano

Find out more

Michael Tilson Thomas (1944–2026)
Agnegram (8 minutes)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)
Piano Concerto No. 1 in F sharp minor, Op. 1
(27 minutes)
Vivace
Andante
Allegro vivace

Daniil Trifonov, piano

INTERMISSION

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique"
(46 minutes)
Adagio; Allegro non troppo
Allegro con grazia
Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

Keep the night going following the November 7 concert with **After Party**, the SLSO's post-concert hang. Sip drinks, spend time with friends, and take in the music in the Berges Family Grand Lobby. No additional ticket required.

This weekend's concerts are sponsored in part by a generous gift from **Andy and Peggy Newman**.

The Saturday, November 7 concert is sponsored in part by a generous gift from **John and Christine O'Shaughnessy**.

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Passion and Fate

Music Director Stéphane Denève leads us off today with the late Michael Tilson Thomas' jazzy, elliptical, and spirited *Agnegram*, written in honor of an "indefatigably enthusiastic" champion of live orchestral music. The same could be said of Tilson Thomas himself, who passed away in April 2026. We welcome the SLSO debut of Daniil Trifonov, performing a work that announced the arrival of a generational talent: Sergei Rachmaninoff's soulful Piano Concerto No. 1. Often overlooked in orchestral programming, the concerto offers a wonderful showcase for Trifonov's exceptional artistry. The concert closes with similarly heartfelt music from another Russian master. Brimming with beauty and sorrow, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony was a personal triumph for the composer—although it also proved to be a farewell.

Agnegram



© New World Symphony

Michael Tilson Thomas

Born 1944, Los Angeles, California
Died 2026, San Francisco, California

The composer writes:

Agnegram was written to celebrate the 90th birthday of Agnes Albert and is a portrait of her sophisticated and indefatigably enthusiastic spirit. Agnes led a remarkable life. For half a century she was the San Francisco Symphony's friend, mentor, patroness, and muse. She grew up performing music and mingling with musicians of all ages. She appeared as a soloist with Pierre Monteux on his last concerts as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. She loved young people, and one of her enduring legacies is the SFS Youth Orchestra.

The piece is composed of themes derived from the spelling of her name. A–G–E are obviously the notes that they name. B is B flat (as this note is called in German). S is E flat, also a German musical term. T is used to represent one note, B natural, the "ti" of the solfège scale. From these arcane but not unprecedented manipulations (Bach, Schumann, and Brahms, among others, enjoyed this game), a basic "scale" of eight unusually arranged notes emerges, from which all the themes are drawn. The piece itself is a march for large orchestra.

The first part of the march is in 6/8 and is almost a mini-concerto for orchestra, giving brief sound-bite opportunities for the different sections of settling into a jazzy and hyper-rangy tune. The middle section of the march, or trio, is in 2/4 and settles into a kind of sly circus atmosphere. Different groups of instruments in different keys make their appearance in an aural procession. First, the winds in C play a new march tune saying "Agnes Albert." Then, the instruments in F are heard playing the same tune. But as these instruments are transposing instruments, although the notes they play read A–G–N–E–S etc., the notes that are heard are completely different. They are followed by instruments in E flat and B flat until quite a jungle-like cacophony is built up—punctuated by alternately elegant and goofball percussion entrances. The section recalls many famous tunes that amused Agnes. There are surreal references to Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, and Irish lullabies, but they appear only to the degree that the notes that they have in common with her name will allow. The jazzy 6/8 tune reappears now in canon and the piece progresses to a jubilant and noisy ending.

Michael Tilson Thomas © 1998

First performance: May 14, 1998, the composer conducting the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall; **First SLSO performance:** These concerts; **Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (two doubling piccolo), piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings

Piano Concerto No. 1



Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born 1873, Semyonovo, Russia
Died 1943, Beverly Hills, California

The Original Concerto

Sergei Rachmaninoff completed his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1891, as an 18-year-old student at the Moscow Conservatory. He also played the solo part for its premiere at the Conservatory in March 1892. However, although the concerto is designated "Opus 1" (i.e. the composer's first published work), the music as we know it today is the product of a mature artist.

Revision and Revolution

By the late 1890s, Rachmaninoff had lost faith in the First Concerto, refusing to perform it. Nearly 20 years passed before he set about correcting what he perceived as its defects. In 1917, with Russia in the throes of its epochal October Revolution, Rachmaninoff began to revise the concerto. His memoirs give a picture of serene detachment, "so engrossed with my work that I did not notice what went on around me.... I sat at the writing table or the piano all day without troubling about the rattle of machine guns and rifle shots."

After he left Russia, Rachmaninoff performed the thoroughly revised piece frequently in Europe and America and subsequently recorded it. Nevertheless, the composer's First Piano Concerto never attained the popularity of his Second or Third, and it remains the least known of Rachmaninoff's works for piano and orchestra.

The Music

The short passage that opens the concerto could hardly be more dramatic: bold fanfares in the brass are answered by cascading figures from the soloist. This leads directly to the first movement's principal theme, a melody in that soulful, lyrical vein so typical of Rachmaninoff. More animated ideas follow, leading eventually to a resounding cadenza for the soloist. The second movement casts the piano as a poetic dreamer, with melodies conveying a sense of romantic reverie. The finale again brings a change of mood, with lively music and dazzling keyboard work.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2007

First performance: March 17, 1892, Vasily Safonov conducting the Moscow Conservatory orchestra with the composer as soloist; **First SLSO performance:** December 29, 1911, Max Zach conducting with Arthur Shattuck as soloist; **Most recent SLSO performance:** April 28, 2019, Leonard Slatkin conducting with Olga Kern as soloist; **Instrumentation:** solo piano; 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, strings

Symphony No. 6



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born 1840, Votkinsk, Russia
Died 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

Inspiration from Anguish

The story of Tchaikovsky's final years presents a poignant conjunction of artistic triumph and growing personal anguish. By 1891, the composer had established himself as Russia's foremost musician, yet Tchaikovsky suffered increasingly from fits of anxiety and depression. His feelings of pathos often found expression in his music, so it is not surprising that a symphony Tchaikovsky began in the winter of 1891–92 was intended to express a grand program of life, disappointed love, and death.

The composer soon abandoned this effort, but sometime during the following year, Tchaikovsky found the inspiration he needed. In February 1893 he wrote to his nephew, a favorite correspondent: "There will be much that is novel in the form of this work. For one thing, the final movement will not be a noisy Allegro but a broad Adagio. You can't imagine what bliss it is to know that my time is not yet over, that I can still do good work."

A Last Testament

The "Pathétique" Symphony—its title was suggested by the composer's brother—crowns Tchaikovsky's output. Passion, delicacy, heroism, and tragedy all find a place in its music. Shortly before completing the symphony, Tchaikovsky wrote: "I have never felt such satisfaction, such pride, such happiness as I do now in knowing that I am the composer of this beautiful work." Less than two weeks after its premiere, he was dead. The circumstances of his passing remain uncertain, but it does not seem too much to suggest that—knowingly or not—Tchaikovsky composed his own requiem.

What to Listen For

- The introductory Adagio's brooding theme is carried over and developed in the searing harmonies and thunderous brass of the succeeding Allegro.

- The second movement's waltz-like themes, which flow smoothly despite being written in an asymmetric 5/4 time

- The triumphal march of the third movement shares many of the characteristics of a typical symphonic finale. However, the concluding Adagio plunges the music back into the sorrowful mood of the symphony's opening moments.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2007

First performance: October 28, 1893, the composer conducting in St. Petersburg; **First SLSO performance:** January 9, 1906, Alfred Ernst conducting; **Most recent SLSO performance:** May 4, 2019, Leonard Slatkin conducting; **Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

Artists

For Music Director Stéphane Denève's bio, see page 4.



© Dario Acosta

Daniil Trifonov has made a spectacular ascent of the classical music world, as a solo artist, champion of the concerto repertoire, chamber and vocal collaborator, and composer. Described by *The Times of London* as "without question the most astounding pianist of our age," Trifonov is also a Grammy Award–winning artist for his 2018 album *Transcendental*. His career highlights include acclaimed performances with the world's leading orchestras, world premieres, solo recitals, and a season-long tenure as the New York Philharmonic's Artist in Residence.

In the 2026/27 season, Trifonov joins the Berlin Philharmonic and Kirill Petrenko at New York's Carnegie Hall and on an extensive South American tour for performances of Brahms' First Piano Concerto. He embarks on a major transatlantic tour with a new solo recital program of works by Handel, Schubert, Stravinsky, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Juan Francisco García, Bullumba Landestoy, Camargo Guarnieri, and the versatile composer-pianist himself. His latest album, *My American Story – South*, released by Deutsche Grammophon, showcases the rich and eclectic music of Latin America. These concerts mark Daniil Trifonov's SLSO debut.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nov 14 Sat 7:30pm
Nov 15 Sun 3:00pm

Shostakovich's Eighth

David Afkham, conductor
St. Louis Symphony Chorus
Erin Freeman, director

Find out more

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)	***Psalm 114 (When Israel out of Egypt Came)*, Op. 51** (15 minutes) St. Louis Symphony Chorus
Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)	***Symphony of Psalms*** (21 minutes) Exaudi orationem meam – Expectans expectavi Dominum – Alleluia. Laudate Dominum St. Louis Symphony Chorus
	INTERMISSION
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)	**Symphony No. 8 in C minor, Op. 65** (61 minutes) Adagio – Allegro non troppo Allegretto Allegro non troppo – Largo – Allegretto

Keep the night going following the November 14 concert with **After Party**, the SLSO's post-concert hang. Sip drinks, spend time with friends, and take in the music in the Berges Family Grand Lobby. No additional ticket required.

This weekend's concerts are sponsored in part by a generous gift from **Elizabeth M. Davis and Mark A. Bayles**.

The Saturday, November 14 concert is sponsored in part by a generous gift from **Ms. Amy Kaiser**.

The St. Louis Symphony Chorus is underwritten in part by the **Richard E. Ashburner, Jr. Endowed Fund**.

26/27
147th Season

Beauty in Darkness

The three pieces of music you'll hear David Afkham conduct today touch on struggle, faith, and the possibility of salvation. Joining Afkham and the SLSO is the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, opening its 50th anniversary season with a double feature that epitomizes the ensemble's versatility. Felix Mendelssohn's setting of *Psalm 114* and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* both draw on liturgical texts, but their juxtaposition makes for a thrilling, moving musical contrast. Afkham then leads us through the emotional peaks and valleys of Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8. A titanic response to the horror and suffering of Russia's struggle against Nazi invasion, Shostakovich's symphony is tense and bleak, yet informed by his conviction that "life is beautiful. All that is dark and depressing will disappear, depart, and the beautiful will reign."

Psalm 114



Felix Mendelssohn

Born 1809, Hamburg, Germany
Died 1847, Leipzig, Germany

Mendelssohn and the Psalms

Mention Mendelssohn and liturgical music, and audiences instinctively think of only one work, his great oratorio *Elijah* of 1846. In fact, Mendelssohn was drawn to sacred music throughout his brief life, and especially the Psalms. He set eleven different Psalms, the first when he was 13, the last just three years before his death at 38.

Psalm 114, one of his finest settings, comes from the crest of his career. From 1835 until 1846, Mendelssohn's role as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra meant he did most of his composition during the summer. In the summer of 1839, he wrote one of his finest chamber works, the Piano Trio in D minor, and also his setting of *Psalm 114*.

The Music

Mendelssohn greatly admired Handel's oratorios and choral works, and his setting of *Psalm 114* consciously recalls the earlier master's grandeur and contrapuntal skill. The text itself is quite powerful, and Mendelssohn's setting is concise, spanning only about a dozen minutes. Mendelssohn scores his setting for double chorus and a large orchestra, and he sets the text in Martin Luther's German translation.

Mendelssohn sets each of *Psalm 114*'s four verses at a different tempo. The opening verse contrasts the male and female voices, and gives way to the second, in which the swirling orchestral bassline may suggest the movement of ocean waves. In the third verse, the chorus haltingly queries what has caused this vast disruption. This is virtually an *a cappella* movement, the voices accompanied only by a bare bassline. Shining horn fanfares introduce the final verse, which returns to the tempo of the opening section as it praises the power of God. This completes the setting of the text, but Mendelssohn now presses on to offer an effective conclusion in two parts. First, he briefly recalls the solemn opening chorus, then concludes with a grand fugal section—the part most reminiscent of Handel—on the word "Hallelujah."

Adapted from a note by Eric Bromberger © 2017

First performance: January 1, 1840, performed in Leipzig; **First SLSO performance:** These concerts; **Instrumentation:** chorus; 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings

Symphony of Psalms



Igor Stravinsky

Born 1882, Oranienbaum near St. Petersburg, Russia
Died 1971, New York City, New York

A Symphony That Sings

Igor Stravinsky was, among many other things, one of the 20th century's outstanding composers of religiously inspired music. His stature as such rests in no small part on his *Symphony of Psalms*, written in 1930 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The composer wanted to write a symphony, but not the traditional kind, as he explained in his 1936 autobiography: "My idea was that my symphony should be a work with great contrapuntal development, and for that it was necessary to increase the media at my disposal. I finally decided on a choral and instrumental ensemble in which the two elements should be on an equal footing…."

Having settled on a symphony with voices, Stravinsky came "quite naturally," as he described it, to the psalms for its texts. He started setting verses from three of them in Slavonic translations but soon came to favor the sound of Latin.

What to Listen For

- Stravinsky de-emphasizes the role of the stringed instruments in favor of winds and percussion, with no violins or violas, and the cello and bass parts largely limited to supporting roles. The music conveys an austerity and remote grandeur that doesn't mesh with the traditionally warm and intimate tone of violins and violas.

- The second movement reflects the influence of the great chorus-with-orchestra movements of J. S. Bach's sacred works, such as the "Kyrie" of Bach's Mass in B minor.

- Stravinsky described the slow introduction to the third movement as "a prayer to the Russian image of the infant Christ with orb and scepter." The tempo soon accelerates for a faster section which the composer explained "was inspired by a vision of Elijah's chariot climbing the Heavens." Stravinsky finally returns to the music of the introduction, concluding the movement much as it began.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2012

First performance: December 13, 1930, in Brussels, Ernest Ansermet conducting the orchestra and chorus of the Brussels Philharmonic Society; **First SLSO performance:** January 20, 1956, Vladimir Golschmann conducting, with the Sumner High School a cappella choir; **Most recent SLSO performance:** January 20, 2013, Courtney Lewis conducting, with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus; **Instrumentation:** chorus; 5 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 4 oboes, English horn, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, piccolo trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings

Symphony No. 8



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia
Died 1975, Moscow, Russia

Two Wartime Symphonies

Shostakovich began work on his Eighth Symphony in the summer of 1943, and the piece was performed for the first time in November of that year, in Moscow. This was the second symphony the composer had produced since the German invasion of his homeland in June 1941. Like the Seventh, or "Leningrad" Symphony, the Eighth Symphony is constructed on a large scale and reflects Shostakovich's response to the war in Russia. Yet the two are quite different. The "Leningrad" Symphony, written in the early days of the Nazi siege of that city, is extroverted and patently patriotic, evoking marching armies, the sound of battle, and the heroism of resistance. With the Eighth Symphony, Shostakovich adopts a more personal and more profound view of the war, perhaps reflecting the enormous suffering the Russian people had experienced since the completion of the "Leningrad" Symphony.

The Eighth Symphony is an emotionally complex work, one in which tragic elements continually vie with expressions of hope. The latter sentiments ultimately emerge victorious from this struggle, allowing the composer to say: "I can describe the philosophical concept of my new symphony very briefly: Life remains beautiful. All that is dark and oppressive will disappear; all that is beautiful will triumph."



RIAN archive

Shostakovich composed his Eighth Symphony in the aftermath of the Soviet army's liberation of Stalingrad (now Volgograd), which ended a brutal five-month siege and marked a turning point in the Second World War.

What to Listen For

- The long opening movement establishes the conflict of light and darkness in clear musical terms: Strings shift between agitation and optimism, the percussion builds insistently, menacing and martial, before a poignant English horn solo emerges from the carnage.

- The strident march of the second movement, which builds on a variation of the symphony's opening motif

- In the fifth movement, a pastoral melody presented by a trio of bassoons gives way to a finale that grows in buoyancy before subsiding, ending with a note of hope and serenity rather than triumphalism.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2004

First performance: November 4, 1943, Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting the USSR Symphony Orchestra in Moscow; **First SLSO performance:** May 15, 1975, Leonard Slatkin conducting; **Most recent SLSO performance:** April 11, 2015, Hannu Lintu conducting; **Instrumentation:** 4 flutes (two doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E flat clarinet, 3 bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

Artists



© Gisela Schenker

David Afkham has received international acclaim for his insightful musicianship and compelling performances. Afkham recently concluded a celebrated tenure as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España (2019–2026). Highlights of the 2026/27 season include Afkham's much-anticipated debut at the BBC Proms with the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España in a program dedicated to Spanish repertoire. He also returns to the ensemble for two further projects, as well as to the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. Afkham's international career includes performances with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Concertgebouworkest, London Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin, and Wiener Symphoniker. His recent opera highlights include Strauss' *Elektra* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and productions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Strauss' *Arabella* at the Semperoper Dresden and Teatro Real Madrid. David Afkham's most recent appearance with the SLSO was in February 2025, conducting works by Outi Tarkiainen, Mozart, and Brahms.

For St. Louis Symphony Chorus director Erin Freeman's bio, see page 38.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS

Celebrating its milestone 50th anniversary in the 2026/27 season, the St. Louis Symphony Chorus partners with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in delivering extraordinary performances across the spectrum of choral-orchestral music. Recognized for its exceptional artistry, the ensemble has performed with the SLSO locally and nationally since its founding in the 1976/77 season by then-Music Director Jerzy Semkow. Erin Freeman has led the Symphony Chorus since 2024. Learn more at **slso.org/slsc**.

Erin Freeman
Director

Leon Burke III
Assistant Director

Gail Hintz
Accompanist & Manager

Timothy J. Anderson
George Aplin
Nicholas D. Bashaw
Jerry Bolain
Joy Boland*
Robyn Brandon
Mo Breece
Daniel P. Brodsky
Elise Brubaker*
Ashley Budde
Spencer Lee Burbach*
Catherine Burge
Leon Burke III*
Leslie Caplan
Victoria Carmichael*
Mark P. Cereghino
Rhonda Collins Coates
David T. Cox
Derek Dahlke*
Kelly Daniel-Decker
Laurel Ellison Dantas*
Grace Denton
Mary C. Donald
Ladd Faszold
Dan Fink
Alan Freed
Mark Freiman*
Lea Luecking Frost
Warren Fryeton
Mason German*
Deborah Gil
Megan E. Glass
Justino Gordón-LeChevalié*
H. Everett Gossard
Carlea Halverson
Jessica Hansen
Timolyn Hardy
Gerica Harris
Kevin D. Hart
Kara Heeb
Nancy Helmich
Ellen Henschen
Matthew Jellinek
Jahlil Johnson*
Samantha Johnson
Preston Jordan
Austin Kellogg
Jason D. Keune
Patricia Anne Kofron
Christina Kruger*
Paul Kunnath
Patricia Lacoss-Arnold
Sarah Lally
Sarah Lancaster
William Larson
Lisa Leonhart
Carl Lian*
Julie Longyear
Kellen Markovich
Elizabeth McKinney
Brenna McLain
Scott Meidroth
Evan Mueller
Elizabeth Musch
Abby Nahlik
Hannah Nelson*
Shelby Niemann
Uzochkwai Nwaduba
Duane L. Olson
Matt Pentecost*
Brian Pezza
Graham Pezza
David Piston
Sarah Price*
Shelly Ragan
Kelsie Rathbun*
Robert Reed*
Valerie Christy Reichert
Kate Reimann*
Casey Ridenour
Joy Rikli
Michelle Rose
Nathan Tulloch Ruggles*
Paul N. Runnion
Taran N. Sachak
Hannah Schallom
Mark V. Scharff
Sophie Shugart-Fischer*
Victoria Siddell*
David Spencer
Adam Stefo*
Laura Swearingen
Heather Butler Taylor
Andrew Thomas
Natanja Tomich*
Philip Touchette*
Caitlin Towell
Nancy Maxwell Walther
Diane Watson
Kelly Webb
Emily Welch
Michael Wilke
Andrew Wilson*
Tristan Wood
Samuel Wright*
Susan Donahue Yates
Bridget Yelk
Danielle Yilmaz*
Raphaella Zavaglia*
Karen Zeferino
Carl Scott Zimmerman

*Section Principals

Powell Hall Presents

Nov 18 Wed 7:30pm

The BLACK JACKET SYMPHONY

Led Zeppelin IV

Ben Owens, guitar
Erika Crowley, keyboard
Heath Price, drums
Jon Campbell, vocals
Patrick Himes, guitar
Van Hollingsworth, bass

Find out more

Program will be announced from the stage.

Keep the night going following the concert with **After Party**, the SLSO's post-concert hang. Sip drinks, spend time with friends, and take in the music in the Berges Family Grand Lobby. No additional ticket required.



26/27
147th Season



© Jon Gitchoff

The Black Jacket Symphony presents unique concert experiences recreating classic albums in a live performance setting.

Classic

/ kla-sik / noun.

1. A work generally considered to be of the highest rank or excellence, especially one of enduring significance.

2. A work recognized as definitive in its field, serving as a standard, model, or guide.

A selected album is performed in its entirety by a group of musicians handpicked for that concert. With no sonic detail overlooked, the musicians do whatever it takes to musically reproduce each album.

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Production Credits

Randall Hughes, audio
Forrest G. Larramore, lighting

Led Zeppelin IV

"Hey, hey, mama, said the way you move / Gonna make you sweat, gonna make you groove"

When *Led Zeppelin IV* landed in stores in November 1971, there was no band name on the cover, no title, no track listing. What band would be so bold?

A hint was on the LP's label. Four symbols, including one that seemed to spell out "Zoso." That name would become a kind of underground title for what was actually *Led Zeppelin IV*.

Led Zeppelin was ticked off at the time. They put no identifying markers on the album cover to show the music press and critics who had routinely trashed the band that the music could stand on its own.

They were right. The best-selling album, generally considered Led Zeppelin's creative peak, wove earthy, acoustic elements around thunderous hard rock and blues. The album was recorded at Headley Grange in Hampshire, England. The band also recorded portions of three other albums at the historic residence: *Led Zeppelin III*, *Houses of the Holy*, and *Physical Graffiti*.

"Headley Grange was somewhat run down, the heating didn't work," guitarist Jimmy Page recalled. "But we needed a place where we could have a cup of tea, wander around the garden and go in and do what we had to do."

Led Zeppelin IV is one of the most influential albums ever made, one that has been rediscovered by successive generations. An instant success, it entered the UK charts at number one and stayed on the charts for 62 weeks. In the US, it became the largest-selling album that didn't hit number one on the charts, peaking at number two.

These songs are legendary, from the crashing intro of "Rock and Roll" to "Black Dog" (named after a dog that ran around Headley Grange), and from the ethereal beauty of "The Battle of Evermore" to the anthemic classic "Stairway to Heaven."

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nov 20 Fri 7:30pm
Nov 21 Sat 7:30pm

A Salute to America
Featuring the US Naval Academy Glee Club

John Morris Russell, conductor
John Goodman, narrator
US Naval Academy Glee Club

Find out more

Peter Boyer
(b. 1970)

American Mosaic (32 minutes)

John Goodman, narrator

INTERMISSION

Music from the USNA Glee Club



The US Naval Academy Glee Club

26/27
147th Season

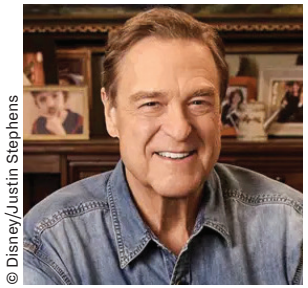
Artists



© Tina Gutierrez

John Morris Russell is a musical leader, conductor, and educator who has served as conductor of the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra since 2011. He is also Music Director of the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra in South Carolina. A Grammy Award–nominated artist, Russell has worked with performers including Aretha Franklin, Emanuel Ax, Hilary Hahn, Cynthia Erivo, Steve Martin, Brian Wilson, and Leslie Odom, Jr.

Russell makes regular guest appearances conducting America's most renowned orchestras, and his work in opera and musical theater includes Cincinnati Opera's productions of Hans Krása's *Brundibár* and the world premiere of Scott Davenport Richards' and David Cotes' *Blind Injustice*. He has also collaborated with Wolf Trap Opera and New York City Ballet. Russell has contributed nine albums to the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra discography, and served as co-producer and conductor of American Public Television's Emmy Award–nominated *Rick Steves' Europe: A Symphonic Journey*. John Morris Russell's most recent appearance with the SLSO was in February 2025, when he conducted the Double Play concert featuring Adam Wainwright at the Stifel Theatre.



© Disney/Justin Stephens

John Goodman is a Golden Globe– and Emmy Award–winning film, television, and theater actor whose career to date spans five decades and countless unforgettable roles. Goodman is a frequent collaborator of legendary directors Joel and Ethan Coen, and has worked with other Academy Award-winning directors including Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Goodman's recent acting credits include films like Iñárritu's *Digger*, released in October 2026, and *Chili Finger*, in addition to television shows such as *The Righteous Gemstones*, and *The Conners*, where he reprised his Golden Globe Award–winning performance as Dan Conner from the original *Roseanne* series. A prolific voice actor, he has also appeared in movies including *The Emperor's New Groove*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, and *Take Me to the River: New Orleans*.

On the theater stage, Goodman has received rave reviews for performances in the Broadway revival of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's *The Front Page*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, David Mamet's *American Buffalo*, and Mike Nichols' staging of Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*. These concerts mark John Goodman's SLSO debut.



The United States Naval Academy Glee Club has achieved national prominence as one of America's premier choral ensembles. The Glee Club often performs choral-orchestral masterpieces alongside leading American orchestras. Recent performances include Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Joseph Haydn's *The Creation*, and Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The Glee Club has performed extensively throughout the US and abroad, with notable appearances including the dedication ceremony and anniversary of the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, the "We Are One" concert for President Barack Obama's first inauguration, and events in Boston and Dallas commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The Glee Club represents the United States, the Navy, Marine Corps, and the United States Naval Academy with honor, pride, and distinction. These concerts mark the United States Naval Academy Glee Club's SLSO debut.

Nov 22 Sun 3:00pm

St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra
Season Opener

Samuel Hollister, conductor
St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra

Find out more

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–1969)	**Overture for Orchestra** (6 minutes)
Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)	***Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46** (15 minutes) Morning Åse's Death Anitra's Dance In the Hall of the Mountain King
	INTERMISSION
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)	***Scheherazade*, Op. 35** (42 minutes) Largo e maestoso – Allegro non troppo (The Sea and Sinbad's Ship) Lento – Allegro molto (The Story of the Kalendar Prince) Andantino quasi allegretto (The Young Prince and Princess) Allegro molto (Festival in Baghdad – The Sea – Shipwreck – Conclusion)

Youth Orchestra programs are presented by the **Tynewald Foundation** and supported in part by the **G.A. Jr. and Kathryn M. Buder Charitable Foundation**, and the **ESCO Technologies Foundation**.

Samuel Hollister is **The Fred M. Saigh Youth Orchestra Music Director**.

26/27
147th Season

Overture for Orchestra



Grażyna Bacewicz

Born 1909, Łódź, Poland
Died 1969, Warsaw, Poland

Child Prodigy

Grażyna Bacewicz faced extreme challenges in her life: the dangers of World War II followed by the specter of communism, and in 1954, a serious car accident that ended her performing career. But her early musical background was an enviable one. Both her parents were musical and Grażyna herself emerged as a child prodigy—a gifted pianist as well as violinist. As a teenager, she studied at the Warsaw Conservatory before continuing her studies in Paris.

Occupation and War

On her return to Warsaw, Bacewicz flourished, but her naturally evolving career was interrupted by the Second World War and German occupation. Nazi bombs destroyed the Philharmonic Hall and the opera house, and Bacewicz herself barely escaped death when instinct prompted her to cross a bridge ahead of the bombardment of Garwolin in 1939. From this turmoil emerged Bacewicz's Overture for Orchestra, a beacon of musical optimism.

What to Listen For

The first sounds come from the timpani. You'll recognize the rhythm: it's the "da da da dum" that begins Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. As with Beethoven, this serves a musical function, informing and driving the entire movement. But for Bacewicz, this motif likely had symbolic significance as well.

In 1941, the BBC World Service launched *London Calling Europe* for listeners in occupied territories. The opening of Beethoven's Fifth was adopted as a sting (a musical clip used to signal a transition or create a break), with that rhythm matching the Morse code for V, or Victory. We can't be certain that Bacewicz heard the broadcasts, but her prominent use of the rhythm suggests she was indeed familiar with them.

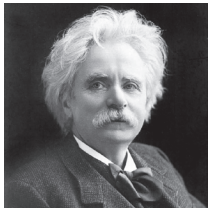
The timpani beats are underpinned by scurrying strings—thrilling, virtuoso writing that reminds us of Bacewicz the violinist. A tranquil Andante section follows, but the respite is brief.

The opening Allegro idea returns, this time marked “energico” (energetic). The strings are asked to play saltando (“jumping”), bouncing their bows on the strings in a literal dance. And throughout, Bacewicz’s orchestration is luminous and transparent.

Adapted from a note by Yvonne Frindle © 2026

First performance: September 1, 1945, by the Kraków Philharmonic, conducted by Mieczysław Mierzejewski; **First SLSO performance:** March 14, 2026, Anna Sułkowska-Migoń conducting; **First YO performance:** This concert; **Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

Peer Gynt Suite No. 1



Edvard Grieg

Born 1843, Bergen, Norway
Died 1907, Bergen, Norway

Ibsen’s Play

In 1874 the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen asked Edvard Grieg to compose incidental music for a dramatic production of his mock-heroic poem *Peer Gynt*, first published in 1867. Ibsen’s play tells of the adventures of the overly confident and utterly irresponsible Peer Gynt, who travels through the world and seems to learn nothing from his fabulous experiences.

As a devout Norwegian nationalist, Grieg was uncomfortable with Ibsen’s unflattering portrait of the Norwegian national character. But he eventually wrote 23 separate numbers for the new production, which proved so successful that it ran for 36 performances.

The Music

From the brief movements that make up the incidental music, Grieg drew eight numbers and assembled them in two suites. These movements do not occur in the suites in the order in which they appear in the play, and Grieg is not trying to tell any sort of story in them: his aim here is simply to present some of his *Peer Gynt* music in concert version.

This music has become deservedly popular for its memorable melodies and for some very exciting moments. Suite No. 1 opens with “Morning,” a depiction of the sunrise in Morocco, as Peer Gynt stands before a statue of Memnon. The poignant “Åse’s Death” accompanies the death of Peer Gynt’s mother. “Anitra’s Dance” shows us the dance of the daughter of a Bedouin chief, which Peer Gynt watches while sipping coffee in her father’s tent. The suite concludes with “In the Hall of the Mountain King.” This famous music, which simply repeats one elemental theme and lets it grow to a great climax, depicts the trolls chasing Peer away after he rejects their way of life and declines to marry the troll king’s daughter.

Adapted from a note by Eric Bromberger © 1999

First performance: The full version of *Peer Gynt* premiered accompanying Ibsen’s play on February 24, 1876 in Oslo, Norway, the composer conducting; the reworked Suite No. 1 premiered in 1888; **First SLSO performance:** February 22, 2002, Eri Klas conducting; **First and most recent YO performance:** November 11, 2016, Leonard Slatkin conducting; **Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

Scheherazade



Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Born 1844, Tikhvin near Novgorod, Russia
Died 1908, Lyubensk, Russia

The One Thousand and One Nights

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov idealized lush Romantic music, drawing on folk song and musical elements considered exotic by most of Europe at the time. He was drawn to the folklore collection *The One Thousand and One Nights*, a series compiled over centuries by countless authors across the Middle East. Stories follow legendary figures like Sinbad, Aladdin, and Ali Baba. Though many versions exist, they all share a framed structure—a story within a story. That’s where the character of Scheherazade comes in.

Scheherazade’s Story

The story begins with a powerful sultan who marries a new wife each day. The next day, he kills them. His terror is so far-reaching that he runs out of women eligible to marry, save one: his advisor’s daughter, Scheherazade. On her wedding night, Scheherazade tells the sultan a story. She keeps her tale going until dawn, stopping at a pivotal, cliffhanger moment. Captivated, the sultan asks her to continue the story the next night. She keeps this pattern up for 1,001 nights. By then, the sultan is smitten, and Scheherazade becomes queen.

The Music

Rimsky-Korsakov was intentionally vague with this symphonic suite, refraining from creating a strict program of music to match a story. The movement titles are broadly related to the tales, but aren't based on any individual version. Rimsky-Korsakov does give us two signposts at the work's opening: the sultan's aggressive, brassy theme; and Scheherazade's hypnotic theme in the solo violin. Variations on these themes return throughout the work.

Caitlin Custer © 2021

First performance: November 3, 1888, the composer conducting the Russian Symphony in St. Petersburg; **First SLSO performance:** March 11, 1910, Max Zach conducting; **First YO performance:** May 22, 1987, Tsung Yeh conducting; **Most recent YO performance:** May 26, 2019, Gemma New conducting; **Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 piccolos, 2 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Artist



© Joan Fisher

Samuel Hollister

Assistant Conductor and The Fred M. Saigh Youth Orchestra Music Director

Conductor, pianist, harpsichordist, composer, arranger, and theorist Samuel Hollister believes that music tells powerful stories that create and strengthen community. Since 2024, he has served as the Assistant Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and The Fred M. Saigh Youth Orchestra Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. Hollister made his subscription classical debut with the SLSO in spring 2026, adding to the dozens of classical, pops, film, family, education, and side-by-side performances with the SLSO he conducts each season. Hollister is a fierce advocate of new music and has worked closely with composers including Kevin Puts, John Corigliano, and Joan Tower, as well as commissioning concertos for guitar and marimba and unearthing long-lost masterworks of the past. Hollister's love of music communication informs his work as a lecturer, writer on music, and host of the SLSO's weekly Noted podcast.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA 2026/27

Samuel Hollister The Fred M. Saigh Youth Orchestra Music Director
Alfredo DeLeon Youth Orchestra Manager

FIRST VIOLINS

Zoe Baldwin
Co-Concertmaster
Brandon Hu
Co-Concertmaster
Jean Park
Asst. Concertmaster
Nathaniel Bian
Charles Chen
Jane Cho
Benji Chu
Ian Chung
Elizabeth Hung
Kanon Ogura
Sophia O'Shea
Lucas Ruan
Max Shuang
Luke Tung
Adam Yu
Claire Zhou

SECOND VIOLINS

Elsa Heaton
Co-Principal
Charis Shing
Co-Principal
Eric Chang
Asst. Principal
Gavin Chiles
Isabella Davis
Jaylin Freeman
Yuntian Hao
Elise Johnson
Caroline Ladendorf
Yik-Wah Lau
Charlotte Meng
Kevin Shi
Miriam Truong
Molly Wang
Yiding Tang*
Emily Roberts*
Louis Shen*
Jemima Tzeng*

VIOLAS

Haowen Liu
Co-Principal
Joy Shin
Co-Principal
Evelina Jacinto
Asst. Principal
Benjamin Van Dyken
Andrew Fei
Ian Jenkins
Ian Kim
Anna Ko
Julia Melton
Cheng Peng
Max Willoughby
Dora Yu
Claire Chen*
Yuhan Liu*
Isabella Mascarinas-Heubsch*

CELLOS

Andrew Su
Co-Principal
Gergo Szilagyi
Co-Principal
Steven Shaw
Asst. Principal
Mihai Bursasiu
Ian Cho
Sam Garrett
Eileen Hinners
Aiden Kim
Alexander Kim
Aston Liang
Griffin Ray
Paul Schultz
Lucas Cheng*
Noah Lipe*
Samuel Noh*

DOUBLE BASSES

Gabe Gibert
Kai Montgomery
Avery Ray
James Rogers

HARPS

Lily Gunawan
Amelia Schwartz

FLUTES

Giifti Benti
Claire Eltoft
Taryn Greeno
Giulia Vitolo
Jackson Liu*
Kali Ann Russell*

OBOES

Elizabeth Babcock
Vito Mantese
Paul Monaco
Amanda Vache
Ellie Heavner*
Drew Schumaker*

CLARINETS

Forest Gong
Peyton Jones
Jacob Philipak
Zaide Rosso
Jack Martin*
Felix Zhang*

BASS CLARINET

Roy Zhu

BASSOONS

Sutherland Allen
Mayson Brandt
Matthew Hogan
Ethan Rahmoeller

HORNS

Lukas Boone
Elijah Flor
Evin Gamage
Jaxon Picarello
Charles Yong
Tenaya Dessain*

TRUMPETS

Linnea Byers
Aaron Eisenhauer
Ashton George
Claire Madsen
Adrian Keune*

TROMBONES

Brendan Kiefer
Edmund Reske
Caleb San
Elijah Spurbeck
William Kliewer*

BASS TROMBONE

Brendan Kiefer

TUBAS

Alex Sullivan
Victor Peralez*

PERCUSSION

Isaac Finn
Elias Lai
Bethany Liao
Armin Malagic
Dean Klawiter*
Kaiyang Ma*

KEYBOARDS

Dylan Jamison
Elizabeth Carroll*

*alternate musician

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nov 28 Sat 7:30pm
Nov 29 Sun 3:00pm

Pictures at an Exhibition

John Storgårds, conductor
Himari, violin

Find out more

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)	***The Isle of the Dead*, Op. 29** (20 minutes)
Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936)	**Concerto in A minor, Op. 82, for violin and orchestra** (21 minutes) Moderato Andante Allegro Himari, violin
	INTERMISSION
Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel	***Pictures at an Exhibition*** (35 minutes) Promenade – Gnomus (The Gnome) – Promenade – Il vecchio castello (The Old Castle) – Promenade – Tuileries – Bydlo (The Polish Oxcart) – Promenade – Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks – Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuÿle – The Market at Limoges – Sepulcrum romanum (Catacombs) – Cum mortuis in lingua mortua (With the Dead in a Dead Language) – The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga) – The Great Gate at Kyiv

Keep the night going following the November 28 concert with **After Party**, the SLSO's post-concert hang. Sip drinks, spend time with friends, and take in the music in the Berges Family Grand Lobby. No additional ticket required.

Himari is the **Carolyn and Jay* Henges Guest Artist**.

The Saturday, November 28 concert is sponsored in part by a generous gift from **Allison W. Roberts**.

The church bell in use for this weekend's concerts is on loan from the **McShane Bell Company** of St. Louis. Many thanks to McShane for allowing the SLSO to use it.

A Lyrical Tour

Conductor John Storgårds' most recent visit to Powell Hall concluded with a memorable performance of Dmitri Shostakovich's playful-yet-pessimistic Symphony No. 15. Storgårds opens this program with an unequivocally dark, moody work by another great Russian composer, Sergei Rachmaninoff. Inspired by Arnold Böcklin's ominous painting of the same name, Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead* is cloaked with intrigue and eerie, Gothic grandeur. Our journey reaches its destination with a literal stroll around an art gallery, as depicted in Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a tribute to the composer's friend that is brought vividly and emotionally to life by Maurice Ravel's orchestration. Between these two works inspired by visual art, we have an opportunity to witness a rising musical star; the 15-year-old prodigy Himari, who makes her SLSO debut performing Alexander Glazunov's dazzling Violin Concerto.



Arnold Böcklin, *Isle of the Dead*, 1883.

The Isle of the Dead



Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born 1873, Semyonovo, Russia
Died 1943, Beverly Hills, California

Böcklin's Painting

A small, rocky island rises from the darkness of an eerily calm sea. At its center stands a grove of tall, slender trees that seem to consume the light. The isle is deserted yet bears the marks of man; a row of rectangular vaults is hewn from the rock, and a wall with a narrow entrance guards the small harbor. A rowboat approaches. In its bow is a coffin, over which stands a figure draped all in white, eyes fixed ahead. The oarsman, dressed in black, propels the vessel gently forward toward the landing.

This image, depicted in Swiss artist Arnold Böcklin's painting *Isle of the Dead*, resonated with early 20th-century figures including Sigmund Freud, V.I. Lenin, and Sergei Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff, who Igor Stravinsky described as "six feet, two inches of Russian gloom," had a penchant for all things sinister and ominous, and was immediately inspired. He completed his symphonic poem of the same name in 1909.

The Music

Rachmaninoff was fascinated—obsessed, even—with the *Dies irae* motif, which has been used in funereal music since the days of Gregorian chant. It pervades *The Isle of the Dead*, forming the thematic basis of all the central motifs.

The music begins in a gentle 5/8 time, illustrating the boat's slow approach to the island, underscored with ominous, rumbling bass. The music slowly gains momentum and volume, building to a menacing climax about halfway through. A new, more uplifting theme now emerges in the upper strings and woodwinds. Rachmaninoff explained that this theme represents life, and its interaction with the *Dies irae* music illustrates the cyclical nature of life and death. The "life" theme builds, struggling to a yearning climax of its own, but the *Dies irae* comes crashing back, drowning the new theme and propelling the work to its hushed, mournful conclusion.

Adapted from a note by Jay Goodwin © 2011

First performance: April 18, 1909, the composer conducting the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra; **First SLSO performance:** February 24, 1911, Max Zach conducting; **Most recent SLSO performance:** February 2, 2019, Matthias Pintscher conducting; **Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Violin Concerto



Alexander Glazunov

Born 1865, St. Petersburg, Russia
Died 1936, Paris, France

Traditionalists and Nationalists

During the second half of the 19th century, Russian music was divided into two distinct camps. More conservative composers, typified by Anton Rubinstein, looked to Western Europe for models of compositional form and style, such as the symphony, the sonata, and the concerto.

Opposing this group was a band of nationalist composers that came to be known as the *moguchaya kuchka*, a term best translated as "The Mighty Handful." Led by Mily Balakirev and, later, by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, these musicians brought a strongly Russian character to their scores. They referred to folk melodies in their themes, frequently alluded to Russian history and lore, and developed a more vibrant and powerful style of orchestration than any cultivated in Western Europe.

Playing Both Sides

Although these schools each had zealous partisans, some composers drew on both movements for influence. Tchaikovsky did this with considerable success, as did Alexander Glazunov, whose 1904 Violin Concerto remains his most popular work.

Glazunov neatly straddled the traditionalist and nationalist camps. From the latter group, specifically his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, he adopted a distinctly Slavic approach to melody, informed by the inflections of Russian folk song. However, he also accepted the traditionalists' faith in the classical forms of symphony and concerto. Glazunov's skilled handling of these forms and thoughtful development of his themes are indebted above all to Felix Mendelssohn and Johannes Brahms, exemplars of the Austro-German "central tradition" disdained by the *kuchka*.

What to Listen For

- Mendelssohn's influence is especially evident in Glazunov's Violin Concerto. Following the example of Mendelssohn's celebrated violin concerto, Glazunov abandons the traditional orchestral opening. Instead, the violin presents a soulful melody over a quiet, restless accompaniment.
- The Andante section introduces a tender new melody and culminates in a demanding cadenza for the soloist.
- The finale, simultaneously martial and dance-like in tone, provides colorful music replete with harmonic passages and other brilliant instrumental effects.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2006

First performance: February 15, 1905, the composer conducting at the Russian Music Society in St. Petersburg, Leopold Auer as soloist; **First SLSO performance:** March 3, 1916, Max Zach conducting, Kathleen Parlow as soloist; **Most recent SLSO performance:** April 30, 2006, Asher Fisch conducting, David Halen as soloist; **Instrumentation:** solo violin; 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Pictures at an Exhibition



Modest Mussorgsky

Born 1839, Karevo, Russia
Died 1881, St. Petersburg, Russia

A Musical Tribute

In 1874, Modest Mussorgsky was immersed in work on his huge opera *Khovanshchina* when he received word of a memorial exhibit of pictures by his close friend, the artist and architect Victor Hartmann, who had died a year earlier. After visiting the gallery, the composer resolved to pay his own tribute by writing a set of piano pieces inspired by the drawings. Mussorgsky worked with remarkable speed—"sounds and ideas fill the air, and I can barely scribble them down fast enough," he wrote—completing the lengthy score on June 22.

The finished work represented ten of Hartmann's images, a format which might have made for a loose suite of unrelated movements. But Mussorgsky prefaced his musical pictures with a "Promenade" in which he imagined himself "roving through the exhibition—now leisurely, now briskly—in order to come close to a picture that has attracted [my] attention." The Promenade unifies the composition, providing an interlude between movements and also appearing in the "Catacombs" and "The Great Gate at Kyiv" sections.

Ravel's Inspired Orchestration

Pictures at an Exhibition was performed infrequently during Mussorgsky's lifetime. But in 1922, conductor Serge Koussevitsky commissioned the French composer Maurice Ravel to orchestrate the music. Ravel's scoring was inspired even when unorthodox: the presentation of the mournful melody of "The Old Castle" by the saxophone is as effective as it is unexpected; the folk tune heard in "Bydlo" (whose title refers to a three-wheeled cattle cart) is both ponderous and lyrical when sung in the high register of the tuba.

The music is sufficiently suggestive that the individual "pictures" require but a little description. "Tuileries" is the famous gardens in Paris, here portrayed with children at play. "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" derives from Hartmann's sketch of decor for a diversion by Marius Petipa, the renowned choreographer at the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg. "Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuÿle" is a composite of two portraits Hartmann drew near the Warsaw ghetto. The portraits depict two Jewish men—one is rich, the other poor. To judge by Mussorgsky's music, the men seem to be quarreling.

"Catacombs" is for a drawing Hartmann made of the famous Roman tombs. Its music continues directly into Mussorgsky's meditation on an inscription there: "Cum mortuis in lingua mortua" (With the Dead in a Dead Language). "Baba-Yaga" is a witch familiar in Russian folklore. She lives in a dreadful hut adorned with human skulls and walks through the forest on giant chicken legs. The finale depicts Hartmann's design for a majestic stone arch to be built over a small chapel in Kyiv; Mussorgsky imagines both the church—we hear a traditional Russian hymn and ringing bells—and the great arch sheltering it.

Adapted from a note by Paul Schiavo © 2013

First performance: May 3, 1923, Serge Koussevitzky conducting in Paris; **First SLSO performance:** October 31, 1930, E. Fernández Arbós conducting; **Most recent SLSO performance:** October 8, 2022, Jonathon Heyward conducting; **Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (two doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, 2 harps, piano, alto saxophone, strings

Artists



© Giorgia Bertazzi

John Storgårds enjoys a dual career as a conductor and violin virtuoso, and is widely recognized for his creative flair for programming. He is the Chief Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, and recently celebrated his 30th anniversary as the Artistic Director of the Lapland Chamber Orchestra. The 2026/27 season begins with Storgårds' return to the BBC Proms, before he conducts his first concerts as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, and as Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa respectively. He also conducts the inaugural concerts at Turku's new Music Centre Fuuga. As a violinist, Storgårds is an active chamber musician and recitalist who frequently incorporates solo performances into his conducting engagements. He also performs recitals internationally with his regular duo partner, Kirill Gerstein. John Storgårds' most recent appearance with the SLSO was in December 2025, conducting works by Clara Wieck Schumann, Joseph Haydn, and Dmitri Shostakovich.



© Naruyasu Nabeshima

Himari made her European debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in 2025, before first-time performances with ensembles including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. She has performed with all the major orchestras in her native Japan. The 26/27 season includes appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony, as well as her much-anticipated debut at Carnegie Hall with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Andris Nelsons. She will embark on her first recital tour of the US in spring 2027, performing works by Edvard Grieg, Maurice Ravel, and Franz Schubert. Himari's debut album was released by Decca in September 2026. She currently studies with Ida Kavafian at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. These concerts mark Himari's SLSO debut.

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