



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DOUBLE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA DEBUTS TO ENLIVEN TCHAIKOVSKY'S
MAGNIFICENT *THE SLEEPING BEAUTY* SUITE IN JANUARY 31 AND FEBRUARY 1
PROGRAM**

**Violinist-turned-conductor Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider and pianist Saleem Ashkar take center stage
with the SLSO for the first time for Schumann's powerful *Manfred* Overture and
Mendelssohn's stormy Piano Concerto No. 2**

(January 10, 2020, St. Louis, MO) – The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra welcomes the SLSO debuts of renowned conductor Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider and pianist Saleem Ashkar as the orchestra takes the audience on an emotional roller coaster in the January 31 and February 1 concerts. Szeps-Znaider leads the SLSO through a broad spectrum of emotional tones, starting with the overture to Schumann's moving opera *Manfred*, followed by Ashkar's interpretation of Mendelssohn's stormy Piano Concerto No. 2, and concluding with a lyrical suite from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*. The concerts are Friday, January 31, at 10:30am and Saturday, February 1, at 8:00pm.

Szeps-Znaider is an internationally-acclaimed violinist and conductor known for his virtuosity in both fields. He embarked on a successful North American tour with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra and SLSO Music Director Stéphane Denève in March 2018. Israeli pianist Saleem Ashkar made his Carnegie Hall debut at the age of 22 and has gone on to perform with the Vienna Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Schumann's opera *Manfred* was adapted from a guilt-ridden poem by Lord Byron. It revolves around a man remorseful for his sins who fails in his attempts to give himself to madness and eventually dies defiantly. Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 2 similarly arose from the composer's melancholy but ends in celebration. Szeps-Znaider and the SLSO close out the program with the famous suite from *The Sleeping Beauty*, which follows the familiar tale of Princess Aurora, who pricks her finger, falls asleep under a hundred-year spell, and is awoken by a handsome prince.

Calendar listing

Friday, January 31, 2020, 10:30am

Saturday, February 1, 2020, 8:00pm

Powell Hall, 718 N. Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO

Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, conductor

Saleem Ashkar, piano



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SCHUMANN *Manfred Overture*

MENDELSSOHN Piano Concerto No. 2

TCHAIKOVSKY / arr. ZNAIDER *The Sleeping Beauty Suite*

Audiences can attend the free Pre-Concert Conversation at 9:30am Friday and at 7:00pm Saturday in the auditorium. This weekend, the conversations are hosted by pianist Peter Henderson.

Tune in to St. Louis Public Radio on Saturday, February 1, at 8:00pm for the live broadcast of the performance. Listen on air (90.7 FM KWMU) or online (stlpublicradio.org/listen.php).

The 19/20 SLSO Classical Season is presented by World Wide Technology and the Steward Family Foundation and runs through May 9, 2020.

Tickets are on sale now and may be purchased at slo.org or by calling the Box Office at 314-534-1700.

About the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

Celebrated as one of today's most exciting and enduring orchestras, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 140th year with the 2019/2020 season and its first with Music Director Stéphane Denève. Widely considered one of the world's finest orchestras, the SLSO maintains its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community connections – all in service to its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The SLSO musical family also includes two resident choruses: the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, founded in 1976 by Music Director Jerzy Semkow; and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, an ensemble focused on the music of African-American and African cultures since 1994; and the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, founded by Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin in 1970.

In addition to its regular concert performances at Powell Hall, which has been the permanent home of the SLSO for more than 50 years, the orchestra is an integral part of the diverse and vibrant St. Louis community, presenting dozens of free education and community programs and performances throughout the region each year. It presents St. Louis Symphony Live at the Pulitzer, a four-program series at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre Saint Louis, with the upcoming season marking the 43rd year of the partnership.

The Grammy Award-winning SLSO's impact beyond the St. Louis region is realized through weekly Saturday night concert broadcasts on St. Louis Public Radio, acclaimed recordings, and regular touring activity. A sought-after artistic partner by preeminent musicians and composers from across the globe, as well as by local and national organizations, the SLSO enjoys a long history of robust and enduring artistic collaborations that have developed and deepened over the years.

Today, the SLSO builds on the institution's current momentum on all fronts, including artistic,



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financial, audience growth, and community impact, and looks toward the future with Stéphane Denève. Denève begins his tenure as the SLSO's 13th Music Director with the 19/20 season. For more information, visit slo.org.

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