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Contacts: St. Louis Symphony Orchestra: Eric Dundon ericd@slso.org, 314-286-4134
National/International : Nikki Scandalios nikki@scandaliospr.com, 704-340-4094

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES SOUNDLAB, A NEW DIGITAL SERIES FOR KIDS COMBINING MUSIC AND SCIENCE THROUGH INTERACTIVE VIDEOS AND ACTIVITIES; FEBRUARY 27
LIVE WATCH PARTY FEATURES SPECIAL GUEST, NASA ASTRONAUT COL. BOB BEHNKEN

The four-part series builds on the SLSO’s profile as a leader in the music education field; available for free on slso.org, SLSO SoundLab is designed for children, families, and teachers around the globe to create music and engage in the science of sound.

February 27 watch party of SoundLab Episode 4, The Golden Record, features question-and-answer with NASA Astronaut Col. Bob Behnken, a St. Louis native

(UPDATED February 18, 2021, St. Louis, MO) – The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra announces special guest, NASA astronaut Col. Bob Behnken, will join the February 27 watch party of SLSO SoundLab, the orchestra’s free educational tool for teachers, students, and families that explores the intersection of music, science, and technology.

SLSO SoundLab launched to teachers in December 2020 and to families in January 2021 and has since reached more than 20,000 children ages 6 to 12 across the country and on three continents. SoundLab is a four-part video and activity series that introduces music to children using STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) concepts and social emotional learning. The SLSO has also held live watch parties of the four SoundLab episodes each Saturday throughout February, culminating with Col. Behnken’s appearance on February 27.

Each 30-minute watch party is hosted by SoundLab host Alicia Revé Like and student participant Imogen Degenhart and features an SLSO musician and special guest. Behnken, a graduate of Pattonville High School in St. Louis County, will talk about his career as a NASA astronaut and answer questions from watch party participants. Spaces for the February 27 watch party of SoundLab Episode 4: The Golden Record, featuring Behnken, are limited. Families may register for the watch party here.

SoundLab Episode 4 is designed around the Golden Record, a collection of sounds and music representing an array of cultures that was sent into space aboard two Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977.

SLSO SoundLab is available for free at slso.org/family.

Marie-Hélène Bernard, SLSO President and CEO, said, “Engaging with and inspiring young people to experience and embrace the power of music is at the core of the SLSO’s mission. This year marks the 100th anniversary of our education concerts. We are thrilled to honor that milestone and to support
platforms which engages children of all ages in developing a life-long appreciation of music. SLSO SoundLab is a truly innovative and timely addition to our robust library of education programs and at-home resources, helping inspire and equip music educators and parents to steward the next generation of music makers and music lovers.”

The four SLSO SoundLab episodes—each with related activities—include:

- **Episode 1: Feel the Sound** – Learn about the scientific and emotional impact of sound waves.
- **Episode 2: Building a Bridge of Sound** – Discover how sound travels and how it can express a kaleidoscope of emotions.
- **Episode 3: Sonic Conversations** – Look at how music creates dialogue and explore the science behind pitch and volume.
- **Episode 4: The Golden Record** – The exploration of an endless index of unique sounds, encouraging students to explore and create their own individual soundscapes.

Filmed in Powell Hall with SLSO musicians and at the homes of children in the St. Louis area, each of the four SLSO SoundLab videos is 15 minutes long, targeted to students in grades 3-8. Children accessing SLSO SoundLab through their schools can then participate in any of 18 corresponding musical activities, from finding and crafting their own set of musical sounds and using digital tools to discover how to manipulate sound, to creating their own music using online composition programs.

Children ages 6 through 12 who complete SLSO SoundLab for Families activities can enter to win an SLSO On the Go experience with an SLSO musician for their family or their classroom. Participants who submit a completed Flipgrid video will be automatically entered into a drawing to win one of three SLSO On the Go experiences where they can meet an SLSO musician, learn more about their instrument and what it is like to be part of a professional orchestra, and hear them perform. Contest rules and more information are available with registration for SLSO SoundLab for Families.

SLSO SoundLab, which was designed to fulfill Missouri and Illinois learning standards for music and science, first launched to teachers regionally in December 2020 with supplemental classroom materials. Breach—which delivers STEAM-centered curricula to students and educators globally—provided complimentary Soundtrap accounts to classrooms to complete SLSO SoundLab online composition activities. Teachers can continue to register for access to SLSO SoundLab for schools at [slso.org/educationconcerts](http://slso.org/educationconcerts).

SLSO SoundLab is a collaboration and presented in partnership with Filament Theatre of Chicago, which helped develop scripts and produce the episodes; Breach, a St. Louis-based company that is providing free access to music software for teachers; and Gateway Music Outreach, long-time SLSO education partner whose students are featured throughout the project.

**100 Years of Education Concerts**

Unique in its approach to engaging students with music, SLSO SoundLab continues the vibrant tradition of the SLSO’s education programming. Begun 100 years ago by then-Music Director Rudolph
Ganz, the SLSO’s education programs have reached countless schoolchildren in Powell Hall, in schools, and online. In the 2018/2019 season, education programs touched nearly 600 schools across Missouri and Illinois and reached more than 44,000 students and teachers. As the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the pause in Education and Family Concerts at Powell Hall, the SLSO pivoted to provide a robust array of at-home resources and programs, expanding its library of downloadable activities, and adding several virtual experiences for students in the classroom, families at home, and teachers seeking professional development—all available at slso.org/education.

**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 141st year with the 2020/2021 season and its second 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; and the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus, an ensemble founded in 1994 and focused on the music of African-American and African cultures. The SLSO family also includes 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 collaboration with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation focused on music of today. The SLSO also serves as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, with the upcoming 2021 festival season marking the 44th 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, financial, audience growth, and community impact, and looks toward the future with Stéphane Denève. For more information, visit slso.org.

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