



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[April 5, 2022]

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MUSIC DIRECTOR STÉPHANE DENÈVE, THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, AND THE IN UNISON CHORUS PERFORM WORLD PREMIERE OF SLSO COMMISSION: NATHALIE JOACHIM'S FAMILY, MAY 6-7

IN UNISON Chorus, a resident SLSO chorus that specializes in the performance and preservation of music from African and African American traditions, joins the SLSO for Joachim's work, written specifically for the chorus

Denève also leads Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 with Akiko Suwanai and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1; tickets start at \$15

(April 5, 2022, St. Louis, MO) – At its May 6-7 concerts, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the IN UNISON Chorus, and Music Director Stéphane Denève will give the world premiere performance of Nathalie Joachim's *Family*, which the SLSO commissioned specifically for the IN UNISON Chorus. Concerts also include performances of Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, featuring violinist Akiko Suwanai in her first collaboration with the orchestra since 2011, and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The concerts are Friday, May 6, at 7:30pm CDT, and Saturday, May 7, at 8:00pm CDT.

In composing *Family*, Joachim integrated the voices and stories of IN UNISON Chorus members through interviews she conducted. The choral-orchestral piece was originally slated to receive its world premiere in the 2020/2021 season. This collaboration is a continuation of a growing relationship between the GRAMMY® Award-nominated Joachim and the SLSO. The SLSO also programmed her piece for solo cello and recorded vocals, *Dam Mwen Yo*, as part of its digital 2020/2021 *Live at the Pulitzer* season—a yearly collaboration with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation that presents bold and adventurous chamber music by composers of today. Recently announced, Denève and the SLSO will open their 143rd season in September with performances of Joachim's *Fanm d'Ayiti (Women of Haiti)*, with Joachim herself performing vocals in the piece.

Stéphane Denève, Music Director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, said, "I simply cannot wait to reunite the wonderful IN UNISON Chorus singers with our fantastic SLSO musicians for the world premiere of our friend Nathalie Joachim's new piece, *Family*. The IN UNISON Chorus and its director Kevin McBeth hold a special place in my heart—they are invaluable ambassadors for music and community. It will be a great joy to share the stage with them and showcase their talents in this inspiring new work. *Family* is a very beautiful and touching lyrical piece, fully expressing Nathalie's generous spirit, her brilliant composition skills, and distinctive sound world. I look forward to collaborating with her in the future."



The 28-year-old IN UNISON Chorus, one of two SLSO resident choruses with more than 120 singers that specializes in music from African American and African traditions, joins the SLSO on this classical program for performances of Joachim's piece. The chorus has been under the direction of Kevin McBeth since 2011. Denève invited the IN UNISON Chorus to join the SLSO on a classical concert, a hallmark of his music directorship that embraces all SLSO performing ensembles. He selected Joachim, a flutist, composer, and vocalist with whom he previously worked, to write the piece.

The commission of Joachim's *Family* is supported by a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The SLSO's project is among 1,248 projects across America totaling \$28,840,000 that were selected to receive this first round of fiscal year 2022 funding in the Grants for Arts Projects category. This program is presented by the Whitaker Foundation, which supports creative experiences throughout the region to foster discovery between neighbors and the community. The IN UNISON Chorus, an extension of the SLSO's IN UNISON programming that creates community connections, has been supported since its inception in 1994 by Bayer Fund.

Following *Family*, Japanese violinist Akiko Suwanai joins the orchestra for performances of Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1. Suwanai, the 1990 winner of the International Tchaikovsky Competition for violin, returns to St. Louis for the second time, having previously collaborated with the orchestra in 2011. Denève leads performances of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1 to close the concert, a symphony requiring a huge orchestra that demonstrates the power of orchestral music.

Tickets start at \$15 and are on sale now. Tickets may be purchased at slo.org or by calling the Box Office at 314-534-1700. A full concert calendar is available at slo.org or on the SLSO's mobile app available for iOS or Android.

Visit slo.org/protocols for updated information about the SLSO's health and safety protocols.

The SLSO's 142nd season runs through June 2022. For more information, visit slo.org.

Calendar listing:

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Music Director Stéphane Denève, the SLSO IN UNISON Chorus, and the orchestra give the world premiere of composer Nathalie Joachim's *Family*, marking the first time in ten years the IN UNISON Chorus joins the SLSO on a classical program. The concert also includes Mahler's Symphony No. 1 and Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 with violinist Akiko Suwanai. Tickets start at \$15 and can be purchased at slo.org.

Friday, May 6, 2022, 7:30pm

Saturday, May 7, 2022, 8:00pm

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

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Akiko Suwanai, violin



St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus | Kevin McBeth, Director

Nathalie JOACHIM	<i>Family (World Premiere; SLSO commission)</i>
Max BRUCH	Violin Concerto No. 1
Gustav MAHLER	Symphony No. 1

*These concerts are presented by the Whitaker Foundation.
The commission of Nathalie Joachim’s Family is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.
IN UNISON is supported by Bayer Fund.*

Audiences can attend the free Pre-Concert Conversation at 6:30pm Friday and at 7:00pm Saturday in the auditorium. This weekend, the conversations are hosted by SLSO Creative Partner Tim Munro.

Tune in to St. Louis Public Radio or Classic 107 on Saturday, May 7, at 8:00pm for the live broadcast of the performance. Listen on air (90.7 FM KWMU or 107.3 FM) or online (stlpr.org).

About the St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus

The St. Louis Symphony IN UNISON Chorus is an auditioned ensemble of 120+ volunteer singers that performs a variety of musical styles, with a focus on the interpretation, performance, and preservation of the music of African American and African cultures. Chorus members often come from IN UNISON Program partner churches. Many chorus members sing in other vocal ensembles or church choirs. All share a love of music and of singing.

Founded in 1994 by Dr. Robert Ray and supported annually by Bayer Fund, the IN UNISON Chorus performs each year with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra at the SLSO’s Gospel Christmas and *Lift Every Voice: Celebration Black History Month* concerts, as well as at the Chorus’ free community concert and throughout the community. The Chorus has been led by Kevin McBeth since 2011.

About the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

Celebrated as a leading American orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 142nd year with the 2021/2022 season and its third with [Music Director Stéphane Denève](#). The SLSO maintains its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community collaborations, honoring its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The SLSO serves as a convener of individuals, creators, and ideas, and is committed to building community through compelling and inclusive musical experiences. As it continues its longstanding focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, the SLSO embraces its strengths as a responsive, nimble organization, while investing in partnerships locally and elevating its presence globally. For more information, visit slo.org.

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