

# SYMPHONY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

THE ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY'S OFFERINGS OF FREE COMMUNITY  
CONCERTS CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AND GROW.

**BY TERRY PERKINS**



*A chamber concert with Symphony musicians at the Old Courthouse*

What do the following locations have in common? The Central Library and the Old Courthouse in downtown St. Louis. The James S. McDonnell Planetarium, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the Jewel Box in Forest Park.

Here's a hint: In addition to being well-known St. Louis landmarks, all these locations also share something with Powell Hall.

The answer? St. Louis Symphony musicians have expanded their performances far beyond the Powell Hall stage to perform free concerts in recent months at all five of these venues as part of a new Symphony Community Programs effort—the STL Symphony Landmarks Series.

And these five concerts are just a few of the many free performances that

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Symphony musicians play throughout the year—in Powell Hall as well as at churches, schools, retirement homes, parks, and other locations throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area—ranging from the St. Louis College of Pharmacy and the Daniel Boone branch of the St. Louis County Library in Ellisville to Clayton High School and the Piper Palm House in Tower Grove Park.

According to Maureen Byrne, Director of Community Programs at the Symphony, the growth of the outreach concerts, since the program was initiated almost 19 years ago, owes much of its success to the enthusiastic support and strong participation of the musicians of the Symphony.

“Currently, 86 per cent of the musicians in the orchestra have officially enrolled in program,” says Byrne, “and other musicians tell us that if we need them, they’ll be there to help. In talks with my colleagues at other orchestras around the country, I’ve found that the participation level here is much higher than in other cities.”

The concept of providing free concerts by Symphony musicians throughout the community evolved from contract negotiations between the musicians and Symphony man-

*Gerard Pagano at St. Agnes Home*



agement in 1994, recalls Principal Horn Roger Kaza.

“In 1994 I was on the musician negotiating team for a multi-year contract,” says Kaza. “Bruce Coppock was the Executive Director at the time, and he asked us to consider the ‘service conversion’ idea—doing community programs as a part of our compensation.

“So we came up with a plan. Musicians could enroll voluntarily to do a week of service in the community rather than play on stage at Powell Hall. It was a grand experiment. And as far as I know, no orchestra had done what we were doing at the time.”

Symphony bass trombone Gerard Pagano was one of those musicians who enrolled in the fledgling program when it started.

“It was very much self-directed at first,” recalls Pagano. “They wanted you to find a venue, then go and do a performance there. One of the first ones I found was the St. Agnes Home in Kirkwood for senior care.”

Pagano has built a strong personal relationship with St. Agnes Home ever since he and other Symphony musicians first played there during the holiday season almost 19 years ago. And it’s that personal connection that Byrne sees as one of the most valuable parts of the Symphony’s Community Programs.

“What Gerry has done over the years at St. Agnes is really the essence of what this program is about,” she says. “It’s connecting the Symphony musicians directly to the community. The residents and staff love it when Gerry visits—and brings his trombone and horn section friends!”

Byrne observes that the commu-

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*Anne Fagerburg and Melissa Brooks at Southwestern Illinois College.*



*Kristin Ahlstrom, Bjorn Ranheim, and Shannon Farrell Williams at St. Anthony of Padua Church.*

Where You Worship, Symphony in Your College, and Symphony Cares for Seniors.

“The reorganization came about three years ago,” says Byrne. “We realized we were having a little trouble describing all the things we were doing—even to our own colleagues. So we decided maybe there’s a different way to organize this. After some brainstorming, the programs started falling into nice, neat categories that are easy to talk about.”

The new approach has also made it easier to track how Community Programs may increase audiences at Powell Hall concerts as well. For example, through sales of reduced price tickets to Symphony concerts, the Symphony in Your College program helped attract nearly 8,800 college students to Powell Hall last season.

The Community Programs have become so popular that several of them—Symphony Where You Worship, Symphony in Your Neighborhood, and SymphonyCares—have begun an application process.

“It’s a simple application,” explains Byrne. “But it’s also a way for us to know that there’s an investment on the part of the requesting group—making sure there’s an audience for the musicians, and that they recognize the great value the musicians are bringing to them.”

*For more information about 2013-14 Community Programs concerts, visit [stlsymphony.org/freeconcerts](http://stlsymphony.org/freeconcerts).*

*Terry Perkins is a St. Louis-based freelance writer.*