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 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 founded in 1994; and also 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 of Saint Louis.

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.
The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1880, is the second-oldest orchestra in the United States. Over the last 140 years, the SLSO has become renowned worldwide and is an integral part of the St. Louis region's cultural, educational, and economic networks. A team from the Saint Louis University Urban and Planning Development department, led by Assistant Professor Robert Lewis, compiled this report based on data for the fiscal years 2016 through 2019 to detail the significant economic and community impact of the SLSO on the region.

Note: this study was completed in March 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SLSO spends by the SLSO and its patrons

• Patrons spend an additional $5.2 million per year in the regional economy that can be attributed directly to their participation in SLSO events.
• This S$36.8 million in annual spending triggers $95.1 million in annual economic activity throughout the St. Louis region.

According to the League of American Orchestras, the orchestra field contributed $11.8 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014. Thus, about 18 percent of the nation's spending by orchestras can be attributed to the St. Louis Symphony St. Louis made up about 0.9 percent of the nation's population and 0.9 percent of the nation's personal income. Therefore, the SLSO's spending represented a much larger proportion of the nation's spending by orchestras than population or income would suggest.

St. Louis is one of the country's top 16 symphony cities. St. Louis has been a sluggishly growing metro area for several decades, with 11 percent average growth from 1970 to 2018, while the other top 15 symphony cities averaged 47 percent growth.

Macroeconomic measures broadly indicate that St. Louis is relatively struggling because its growth pace trails other large metropolitan areas. Moreover, the SLSO is poised to grow its status as a valuable export and a destination for attention, the SLSO is poised to grow its status as a valuable export and a destination for visitors who bring new dollars into the region. Moreover, the SLSO is a Missouri symphony orchestra. While Missouri is home to 81.2 percent of all patrons, Illinois is home to 14.7 percent, including locations outside of the metro area.

St. Louis patrons living on the Missouri side. While recent patrons have come from 49 states (only Delaware is missing) and several other countries, nine out of ten SLSO patrons live in the St. Louis region, with eight out of ten St. Louis patrons living on the Missouri side. With expanded national and international attention, the SLSO is poised to grow its status as a valuable export and a destination for visitors who bring new dollars into the region.

The SLSO thus hosts an event of 240 events per year and averages 262,400 patrons and participants per year.

The SLSO makes a meaningful impact on the St. Louis community

The SLSO impacted 74,000 youth in FY2019. This was an increased and purposeful effort, accomplished through a combination of education concerts at Powell Hall, in-school programs, teacher training, the Youth Orchestra, and other activities.

The SLSO delivered about 1.3 percent of the national total of orchestral education in 2014, again delivering greater impact than the metro area’s share of the nation’s population or personal income. These 267 free community and educational programs attracted a total audience of 48,960, or almost 180 per program—higher than the national average of 101 per capita.

The SLSO delivers more than expected

While St. Louis comprises 0.9 percent of the U.S. population, the SLSO produces well more than one percent of the nation's orchestra-related events and attracts more than one percent of the nation's audiences.

According to the League of American Orchestras (League), the orchestra field contributed $11.8 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014. Thus, about 18 percent of the nation's spending by orchestras can be attributed to the St. Louis Symphony St. Louis made up about 0.9 percent of the nation's population and 0.9 percent of the nation's personal income. Therefore, the SLSO's spending represented a much larger proportion of the nation's spending by orchestras than population or income would suggest.

St. Louis is one of the country's top 16 symphony cities. St. Louis has been a sluggishly growing metro area for several decades, with 11 percent average growth from 1970 to 2018, while the other top 15 symphony cities averaged 47 percent growth.

Macroeconomic measures broadly indicate that St. Louis is relatively struggling because its growth pace trails other large metropolitan areas. Moreover, the SLSO is poised to grow its status as a valuable export and a destination for visitors who bring new dollars into the region. Moreover, the SLSO is a Missouri symphony orchestra. While Missouri is home to 81.2 percent of all patrons, Illinois is home to 14.7 percent, including locations outside of the metro area.

The SLSO thus hosts an event of 240 events per year and averages 262,400 patrons and participants per year.

The SLSO makes a meaningful impact on the St. Louis community

The SLSO impacted 74,000 youth in FY2019. This was an increased and purposeful effort, accomplished through a combination of education concerts at Powell Hall, in-school programs, teacher training, the Youth Orchestra, and other activities.

The SLSO delivered about 1.3 percent of the national total of orchestral education in 2014, again delivering greater impact than the metro area’s share of the nation’s population or personal income. These 267 free community and educational programs attracted a total audience of 48,960, or almost 180 per program—higher than the national average of 101 per capita.

The SLSO delivers more than expected

While St. Louis comprises 0.9 percent of the U.S. population, the SLSO produces well more than one percent of the nation's orchestra-related events and attracts more than one percent of the nation's audiences.

According to the League of American Orchestras (League), the orchestra field contributed $11.8 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014. Thus, about 18 percent of the nation's spending by orchestras can be attributed to the St. Louis Symphony St. Louis made up about 0.9 percent of the nation's population and 0.9 percent of the nation's personal income. Therefore, the SLSO's spending represented a much larger proportion of the nation's spending by orchestras than population or income would suggest.

St. Louis is one of the country's top 16 symphony cities. St. Louis has been a sluggishly growing metro area for several decades, with 11 percent average growth from 1970 to 2018, while the other top 15 symphony cities averaged 47 percent growth.

Macroeconomic measures broadly indicate that St. Louis is relatively struggling because its growth pace trails other large metropolitan areas. Moreover, the SLSO is poised to grow its status as a valuable export and a destination for visitors who bring new dollars into the region. Moreover, the SLSO is a Missouri symphony orchestra. While Missouri is home to 81.2 percent of all patrons, Illinois is home to 14.7 percent, including locations outside of the metro area.
To read the full report, visit slso.org/impact.

Enriching lives through the power of music

314-533-2500 | slso.org