



**St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra**

stéphane denève : music director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CELEBRATES AMY KAISER AND HER DEFINING 27-YEAR
TENURE WITH HER FINAL CONCERTS AS ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS DIRECTOR, APRIL
30-MAY 1**

Music Director Stéphane Denève leads the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and SLSO in performances of Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*; concerts open with the first SLSO performances of the full orchestral version of Jessie Montgomery's *Starburst*, arranged by Jannina Norpoth

(April 19, 2022, St. Louis, MO) – The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra celebrates its remarkable, 27-year partnership with Amy Kaiser, St. Louis Symphony Chorus Director, in concerts at Powell Hall, April 30-May 1. These concerts mark the final performances with Kaiser as Chorus Director, a position to which she was appointed in 1995 by SLSO Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin.

The April 30-May 1 concerts opens with the first SLSO performances of the full orchestral version of Jessie Montgomery's *Starburst*, arranged by Jannina Norpoth. Concerts include choral-orchestral works including Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, the final work performed by the Chorus under Kaiser's preparation. Soprano Katie Van Kooten and baritone Elliot Madore make their SLSO debuts in performances of *A Sea Symphony*. The concerts, presented by Mary Pillsbury and sponsored by the Whitaker Foundation, are 8:00pm CDT, Saturday, April 30, and 3:00pm CDT, Sunday, May 1. Kaiser will also lead the Pre-Concert Conversation, sponsored by Washington University Physicians—a deep dive into the program's music, held one hour before each concert in Powell Hall's auditorium.

Amy Kaiser, St. Louis Symphony Chorus Director, said, "I love working with the amazing singers in the St Louis Symphony Chorus and with all my wonderful colleagues and friends in the SLSO community. It's been a grand adventure with many lifetime high peaks."

Stéphane Denève, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Music Director, said, "When I first met Amy many years ago, I knew she was a special musician with a deep love and respect for music. As I've gotten to know her over the years, I've also come to cherish her larger-than-life personality, sincere care for musicians, and amazing ability to extract the very best from our wonderful Chorus. The incredible quality of our chorus is a testament to Amy's gifts as a musician, leader, and friend. While I am sad to see the end of her tenure, I know her legacy will continue through the very special voices in our Chorus."



Jennifer Nitchman and Chris Tantillo, co-chairs of the SLSO Musicians' Council, said, "Amy Kaiser's musicianship and dedication to her craft are second to none in our industry. We treasure our collaborations with the magnificent St Louis Symphony Chorus, and many of those performances will be remembered as highlights of our careers. We have endless gratitude for Amy's years of impeccable preparation of the chorus that made those unforgettable moments possible. Last but not least, Amy is much loved for her warmth, enthusiasm, and friendship to all. She will be greatly missed, and we wish her all the best in this next chapter of her life."

Kaiser's first concert as Chorus Director took place on October 21, 1995, with Slatkin—then the SLSO's Music Director—leading John Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance* and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection." In the 27 years since, Kaiser led close to 800 rehearsals of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, preparing the acclaimed ensemble for nearly every type of SLSO concert, including classical and holiday concerts; community performances at Queeny Park, Forest Park, and other public spaces; performances of film music including *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Matrix*, and *The Muppet Christmas Carol*; and special performances including collaborations with internationally renowned artists like Andrea Bocelli.

She has garnered a reputation for her ability to prepare a variety of music from Baroque favorites like G.F. Handel's *Messiah*—which she has prepared 11 times in her SLSO tenure—to 20th century works including Leonard Bernstein's "Kaddish" Symphony, Arnold Schoenberg's *Friede auf Erden*, György Ligeti's *Clocks and Clouds*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. She became known by SLSO musicians and guest artists collaborating with the SLSO for her meticulous attention to detail and thorough preparation of the chorus.

Working with four SLSO music directors—Leonard Slatkin, Hans Vonk, David Robertson, and Stéphane Denève—Kaiser refined the Chorus' reputation for impeccable artistry. Under her direction, critics have called the Chorus "eloquent," "excellent as always," and an ensemble with "perfect clarity" and that sings "with a gratifying power and precision." She became a favorite of SLSO guest conductors and collaborated with dozens throughout her tenure. Her expertise in choral preparation led to critically acclaimed performances in many languages, including French, Italian, German, Russian, Hungarian, Latin, and English.

She led the Chorus in several appearances to Carnegie Hall in New York City, with an emphasis on the works of John Adams, including performances of *On the Transmigration of Souls* and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. She also led the preparation of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 3, Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, Johannes Brahms' *A German Requiem*, and Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* for concerts at Carnegie.

A New York native, Amy spent the first part of her career as a freelance choral director, having guest conducted for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Massachusetts, Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival, and conducted more than 50 performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. She was the Music Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons.



Tickets for the April 30-May 1 SLSO concerts 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:

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra celebrates the career of St. Louis Symphony Chorus Director Amy Kaiser, who retires after 27 years with the organization, in concerts April 30-May 1 at Powell Hall. The St. Louis Symphony Chorus joins the orchestra, led by Music Director Stéphane Denève, in performances of Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*. Tickets start at \$15.

Saturday, April 30, 2022, at 8:00pm CDT

Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 3:00pm CDT

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

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Katie Van Kooten, soprano **(SLSO debut)**

Elliot Madore, baritone **(SLSO debut)**

St. Louis Symphony Chorus | Amy Kaiser, director

Jessie MONTGOMERY (arr. Jannina Norpoth) *Starburst* (SLSO commission of full orchestra version)

Claude DEBUSSY *Nocturnes*

Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *A Sea Symphony*

These concerts are presented by Mary Pillsbury and sponsored by the Whitaker Foundation.

Audiences can attend the free Pre-Concert Conversation at 7:00pm Saturday and at 2:00pm Sunday in the auditorium. This weekend, the conversations are hosted by Amy Kaiser.

Tune in to St. Louis Public Radio or Classic 107 on Saturday, April 30, 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 Chorus

Founded in the 1976/1977 season, the St. Louis Symphony Chorus is a highly selective, auditioned ensemble composed of volunteer and paid singers from the St. Louis region. Chorus members come from all walks of life, uniting to create remarkable experiences. Appearing with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra several times each season, the Chorus performs repertoire from the entire



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choral-orchestral canon. Recognized for its artistic excellence, the Chorus has performed with the SLSO at Carnegie Hall to critical acclaim. The Chorus is directed by Amy Kaiser, who celebrates her 27th and final season leading the ensemble in the 2021/2022 season.

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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