



ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
STÉPHANE DENÈVE, MUSIC DIRECTOR
JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO

Saturday, March 26, 2022, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stéphane Denève, music director

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

James Lee III
(b. 1975)

Chuphshah! Harriet's Drive to Canaan (2010-2011)

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

Concerto in F (1925)

Allegro

Andante con moto

Allegro agitato

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

20-minute intermission

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Symphony No. 3 (1935)

Lento; Allegro moderato

Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro vivace; Tempo come prima

Allegro

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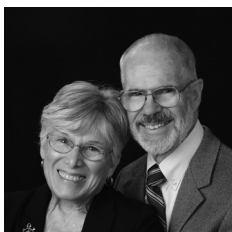
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PROGRAM NOTES

Three composers, emerging from different backgrounds, speaking with distinct musical languages. For all three, the communication of emotion is central.

"My music," writes James Lee III, should communicate to listeners "in such a way that they are deeply moved and enriched because of what they had just heard."

"I try," wrote Sergei Rachmaninoff, "to say simply and directly what is in my heart. If there is love there, or bitterness, or sadness, or religion, these moods become a part of my music."

"Music," wrote George Gershwin, "sets up a certain vibration which results in a physical reaction. I like to think of music as an emotional science."

Three composers, singing directly from one heart to another.

JAMES LEE III

Born 1975, in St. Joseph, Michigan
Chuphshah! Harriet's Drive to Canaan

"I compose music to reach to the inner soul of the listener," writes composer James Lee III, "that elevates them regardless of race or religious affiliation."

For Lee, raised in the Seventh Day Adventist church, music and faith are closely intertwined. Many works have Hebrew names and are inspired by biblical readings, particularly from the apocalyptic visions in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation.

His works also draws on aspects of the Black American experience. *A Different Soldier's Tale* celebrates his grandfather's time as a corporal during World War II. *Hold On, America, Hold On!* tells stories of adversity from the Tulsa Massacre to recent events.

Chuphshah! Harriet's Drive to Canaan explores aspects of the life of Harriet Tubman. "The word 'Chuphshah,'" writes Lee, "is the biblical Hebrew word for freedom. Specifically, it is freedom from slavery. Canaan refers to the northern free states

of America or even as far north as Canada that would have been the 'promised land' for the slaves."

Chuphshah opens with furtive gestures, as Tubman escapes to freedom. After her escape, Lee explores "the emotions that she may have felt. The sadness and longing that prompted her to return to dangerous slave territory in pursuit of family members and other slaves." Throughout the piece, Tubman is represented by the English horn.

Chuphshah quotes songs and spirituals of the time. These include "Follow the drinkin' gourd," "Let my people go," "I Wish I was in Dixie's Land," and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." At times these melodies struggle: "As the American Civil War continues to be bitterly fought," writes Lee, "the music portrays an imagined battle in the war."

Near the end of *Chuphshah*, violins and oboe sing the final line of "Battle Hymn of the Republic," with the words, "His truth is marching on." *Chuphshah* concludes with an evocation of a military funeral for Tubman, celebrating a life of heroism, bravery, and action.

First performance: September 23, 2011, by the
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra,
Marin Alsop conducting

First SLSO performance: March 18, 2022,
Stéphane Denève conducting

Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes,
English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns,
3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani,
percussion, harp, strings

Approximate duration: 12 minutes

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Born September 26, 1898, in Brooklyn, New York
Died July 11, 1937, in Los Angeles, California
Concerto in F

At 25, George Gershwin was world-famous. Over the course of a decade he had ascended from Tin Pan Alley song-hawker to composer of hit songs and Broadway shows, his face gracing the cover of *Time Magazine*.

That year, Gershwin wrote and performed *Rhapsody in Blue*, his first work with orchestra. The piece fast became a sensation, traveling coast to coast and provoking furious debates in the classical world.

Rhapsody's notoriety led to a new commission from the New York Symphony. The request: a full-scale piano concerto. "Many persons thought the *Rhapsody* was only a happy accident," wrote Gershwin. A new concerto would "show them that there was plenty more where that had come from."

The Piano Concerto hums with the teeming activity of a city "Most of my ideas arise from people," Gershwin said, "from personalities and emotions of men and women I meet":

Movement 1: Gershwin wanted to capture "the young, enthusiastic spirit of American life" with several themes, including one with an underlying "Charleston rhythm."

Movement 2: The slow movement, he wrote, is "almost Mozartian in its simplicity," with "a poetic, nocturnal tone. It utilizes the atmosphere of the American blues."

Movement 3: The finale is "an orgy of rhythms," he wrote, "starting violently and keeping to the same pace throughout."

The Piano Concerto has its razzle-dazzle, but Gershwin experiments with orchestral colors. At one moment, the solo piano is accompanied by violas and English horn. At another, a muted trumpet sings above close-harmony clarinets.

"It is a musical kaleidoscope of America," said Gershwin of his *Rhapsody in Blue*, although he could have been speaking of the Piano Concerto. "Of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness."

Gershwin—always busy—completed the new concerto while at work on no fewer than three Broadway musicals. Still, the concerto was a source of pride, and its first rehearsals and performances were, he wrote later, "the peak of my highest joy."

First performance: December 3, 1925, by the New York Symphony, Walter Damrosch conducting, with the composer as soloist

First SLSO performance: February 2, 1946, Vladimir Golschmann conducting, with Jesus Maria Sanroma as soloist

Most recent SLSO performance: April 9, 2017, David Robertson conducting, with Kirill Gerstein as soloist

Instrumentation: solo piano, 3 flutes (third doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

Approximate duration: 31 minutes

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, in Semyonovo, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California
Symphony No. 3

In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution threw Russia into turmoil. Inflation spun out of control, food was scarce, and uprisings threatened rich and poor. With life and livelihood at stake, the 44-year-old Sergei Rachmaninoff left his homeland.

The exile would be permanent. "This is a burden heavier to me than any other," wrote Rachmaninoff. "I have no country. I had to leave the land where I was born, where I struggled and suffered all the sorrows of the young, and where I finally achieved success."

Between 1918 and his death in 1943, Rachmaninoff would write only six new works. "Losing my country, I lost myself also," he wrote. "To the exile whose musical roots have been annihilated, there remains no desire for self-expression; no solace apart from the unbreakable silence of memory."

Summers activated Rachmaninoff's homesickness. Yearning for a place of escape and refuge, the 60-year-old composer and his wife built the Villa Senar on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. There they could surrounded themselves with Russian food, literature, friends, and customs.

It had been three decades since his previous symphony. Then, he vowed never to write another. But lakeside calm and renewal must have spurred action, because by the end of his third summer at the villa, Rachmaninoff had two movements of a new symphony.

The Third Symphony, like Rachmaninoff himself, is a collision of old and new. Rachmaninoff was resolutely old-world, locking himself in something of a pre-Revolution bubble. Yet he was fascinated by modern contraptions: fast cars, speedboats, new-fangled inventions.

The symphony opens with an invented church chant, an otherworldly sound intoned by clarinet, viola, and horn. This chant reappears throughout the work, always in different guises: sometimes murmured, sometimes sung, sometimes screamed.

But the Third Symphony has a modern edge. Its music is in near-constant flux, shocking with an extreme change or shuffling impatiently from idea to the next. Newer sounds abound: strange combinations, muted brass, violinists playing with the wood of their bows.

The work's ambivalence is perfectly captured in the middle movement. Here, slow movement and fast scherzo are fused. Indeed, we might see a portrait of Rachmaninoff himself: the slow-moving melancholy of the old world wedded to the fast-forward impatience of the new.

*First performance: November 6, 1936, by the
Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski
conducting*

*First SLSO performance: November 27, 1936,
Vladimir Golschmann conducting*

*Most recent SLSO performance: March 20, 2010,
André Previn conducting*

*Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes,
English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns,
2 trumpets, alto trumpet, tuba, timpani,
percussion, 2 harps, celesta, strings*

Approximate duration: 39 minutes

Tim Munro

PROFILES

STÉPHANE DENÈVE joined the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra as Music Director in September 2019. Previously he served as Music Director Designate for the SLSO during the 2018/2019 season. He also served as a guest conductor with the SLSO eight times from 2003-2018. He recently extended his commitment to the SLSO through spring 2026.

Now in his third season as the 13th Music Director of the SLSO, Stéphane has shaped his tenure around creating thrilling musical experiences that give an authentic voice to music across genre and time. He maintains his commitment to composers and music of today through thoughtful and innovative programming. He also remains committed to listening and learning, as well as nurturing the SLSO's reputation as a creative hub for the St. Louis community and making orchestral music accessible to all.

In his third season as SLSO Music Director, Denève programmed music that spans genre and time, with familiar and beloved pieces alongside works that spark curiosity and adventure, continuing the SLSO's longstanding tradition of identifying and performing music by composers of today. Each classical concert presents at least one work to St. Louis audiences for the first time. In total, 34 pieces will enter the SLSO's repertoire in the 21/22 season, including 26 works by 22 composers of today.

Since his first visit to St. Louis in 2003, he has charmed audiences with his wit and genuine warmth, and has since shared memorable moments at the annual concert in Forest Park, introduced new ideas including SLSO Crafted concerts, and made music more accessible with new ticket pricing and free tickets for community partners through Stéphane's Seats. He sold out Powell Hall for concerts including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (February 2020) and a night of movie music, sharing the podium with acclaimed composer John Williams (November 2019). His concerts have been described as "near perfect," "revelatory," "Olympian in its grandeur," and "stunning" by critics.

For more than three decades, **JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET** has performed world-wide, recorded more than 50 albums, and built a reputation as one of today's finest pianists. From the start of his career, he delighted in music beyond the standard repertoire, from jazz to opera, which he transcribed himself to play on the piano. His profound professional friendships crisscross the globe and have led to spontaneous and fruitful collaborations in film, fashion, and visual art.

Thibaudet has a lifelong passion for education and fostering young musical talent. He is the first-ever Artist-in-Residence at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, where he makes his home. In 2017, the school announced the Jean-Yves Thibaudet Scholarships, funded by members of Colburn's donor community, to provide aid for Music Academy students, whom Thibaudet will select for the merit-based awards, regardless of their instrument choice.

Thibaudet's recording catalogue has received two Grammy nominations, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the Diapason d'Or, the Choc du Monde de la Musique, the Edison Prize, and Gramophone awards. He is the soloist on Wes Anderson's upcoming film *The French Dispatch*; his playing can also be heard in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, *Wakefield*, and the Oscar-winning and critically acclaimed film *Atonement*. His concert wardrobe is designed by Dame Vivienne Westwood.

In 2010 the Hollywood Bowl honored Thibaudet for his musical achievements by inducting him into its Hall of Fame. Previously a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Thibaudet was awarded the title Officier by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012. In 2020, he was named Special Representative for the promotion of French Creative and Cultural Industries in Romania. He is co-Artistic Director, with Gautier Capuçon, of the Festival Musique & Vin au Clos Vougeot.

JAMES LEE III, born 1975 in St. Joseph, Michigan, cites as his major composition teachers Michael Daugherty, William Bolcom, Bright Sheng, Betsy Jolas, Susan Botti, Erik Santos, and James Aikman. As a composition fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in the summer of 2002, he added Osvaldo Golijov, Michael Gandolfi, Steven Mackey, and Kaija Saariaho to his roster of teachers, and studied conducting with Stefan Asbury.

Since Lee's graduation with a D.M.A. in composition from the University of Michigan in 2005, his orchestral works have been commissioned and premiered by the National Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony Orchestra, and the orchestras of Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Omaha, Pasadena, Memphis, Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Atlanta, and

Akron, and have been conducted by such artists as Leonard Slatkin, Marin Alsop, Michael Tilson Thomas, Juanjo Mena, David Lockington, Thomas Wilkins, and others.

Lee is also a winner of a Charles Ives Scholarship and the Wladimir Lakond Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Chamber organizations such as the Montrose Trio, Ritz Chamber Players, and the Harlem Chamber Players have performed and premiered music by James Lee III. Pianist Rochelle Sennet recorded his piano music on the Albany Label in 2014.

During the 2021/2022 season, *Sukkot Through Orion's Nebula* will be performed by the New World Symphony Orchestra and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. World premieres of new works include *Amer'ican*, which will be premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra. *Nijji Memories*, a flute concerto, will be premiered by Julietta Curenton and the Columbia Orchestra. The Calyx Piano Trio will premiere Lee's *Tones of Clay* at Tanglewood. Other world premieres in 2022 include *Freedom's Genuine Dawn* premiered by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in January, *Arukah Symphony* premiered by the Maryland Symphony Orchestra in February, *Hold On, America, Hold On!* premiered by the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra, and Violin Concerto No. 2 "Teshuah" premiered by violinist Carla Trynchuk and the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra. *Tethered Voices* will be premiered by the University of Michigan and a new work for soprano and string quartet will be premiered by Karen Slack and the Pacifica String Quartet at Carnegie Hall in New York and Shriver Hall in Baltimore in May. James Lee III is a Professor of Music at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

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 serves the St. Louis region through its commitment to artistic excellence, educational impact, and community collaborations, honoring its mission of enriching lives through the power of music.

The core of the SLSO's artistic foundation is its dynamic partnership with Stéphane Denève. Denève's energetic musicianship, visionary storytelling, and collaborative spirit have created stronger connections with local and visiting artists, as well as advanced the SLSO's role as a leader in music education.

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, founded in 1994, which focuses on the music of African American and African traditions.

In addition to its concerts at historic Powell Hall, which has been the SLSO's home for more than 50 years, the orchestra is an integral part of the vibrant St. Louis community. Orchestra musicians share dozens of education and community performances throughout the region each year at medical facilities, places of worship, community centers, and schools. The St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra was founded by Conductor Laureate Leonard Slatkin in 1970. The SLSO is proud to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its education programs in 2021.

For more than 15 years, the St. Louis Symphony: Live at the Pulitzer series has highlighted composers and music of today through innovative performances in collaboration with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation. The SLSO has also served as the resident orchestra for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for more than 40 years and enjoys enduring artistic collaborations with individuals and organizations locally and around the world.

The Grammy® Award-winning SLSO's impact is expanding with a growing digital presence that helps make music more accessible to all, realized through digital concerts and weekly Saturday night concert broadcasts on St. Louis Public Radio and Classic 107.3, acclaimed recordings, and regular tours domestically and abroad.

Since the arrival of Marie-Hélène Bernard as President and CEO in 2015, the SLSO has aligned its mission to make music more accessible, while fostering a culture welcoming to all. 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.

142TH SEASON 2021/2022

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**denotes chair vacant*

***denotes replacement*

****denotes leave of absence*

† denotes extra musician

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