

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra announces New Generation Initiative to expand access to SPCO performances for young people

Dual focus on free/low priced tickets and new concert experiences designed for young people

Initiative builds upon the SPCO's commitment to broad community accessibility

THE NEW GENERATION INITIATIVE

- **Free tickets** to unlimited SPCO concerts for **children ages 6–17** starting in the 2016-17 season
- **Free tickets** to unlimited SPCO concerts for **students** starting in the 2016-17 season
- **New 3-concert series** at **Icehouse**, a Minneapolis bar, restaurant and eclectic music venue
- A special **Happy Hour Concert** at the **Ordway Concert Hall** featuring a happy hour with drink specials and food trucks from 4:30–6:00pm, immediately followed by a one-hour concert
- **Young Audience Guest Passes** given to current SPCO subscribers to invite young people to concerts for free
- Continuation of **\$10 best available seats** for **club2030 members** (the SPCO's free club for people in their 20s and 30s) at nearly all SPCO concerts and an expansion of the number of exclusive post-concert **after parties** held for **club2030 members** throughout the season
- **Exclusive ticket pre-sale** for young audiences before individual tickets go on sale to the general public (August 9–15)

SAINT PAUL, MN, AUGUST 9, 2016 – Today The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) announces its New Generation Initiative to dramatically expand access to classical music for young people in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area. The SPCO is committed to serving the broadest possible audience in the Twin Cities, and the New Generation Initiative is the most recent step in the organization's history of bold moves toward greater accessibility for the community. Through generous funding from a small group of individual donors, the SPCO is making it easier than ever for young people to experience SPCO concerts through these new efforts.

“We believe our music has the power to inspire, challenge, move and uplift and that everyone, including young people, deserves the opportunity to experience transformational performances, regardless of socio-economic status,” said SPCO Managing Director and President Jon Limbacher. “We’ve already made our performances accessible through affordable ticket prices and performance venues conveniently located throughout the metro area, and now we’re expanding our accessibility even further by inviting children and students to attend unlimited SPCO concerts for free, along with a suite of new programs that will allow us to serve more young people in our community through our music.”

A long history of accessibility and growing audiences

The New Generation Initiative expands on the SPCO’s long-held commitment to broad accessibility for the community, which has focused on both affordable ticket prices and geographic accessibility. The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra’s Neighborhood Series brings music from the SPCO’s core repertoire to suburbs and neighborhoods throughout the Twin Cities, bringing music to where people live and making it easier for them to get to concerts. The Neighborhood Series has expanded from three venues in 2004 to eight venues in 2016. The SPCO also performs regularly at the new Ordway Concert Hall in downtown Saint Paul and at Ted Mann Concert Hall at the University of Minnesota, and brings its Chamber Music Series, which features small ensembles performing core chamber music repertoire, to 3 different venues: the Capri Theater in North Minneapolis, Sundin Music Hall at Hamline University in Saint Paul, and the Center for the Performing Arts at Saint Paul Academy and Summit School in Saint Paul’s Highland Park. With the addition of the SPCO at Icehouse Series and several venues on the SPCO’s boundary-defying Liquid Music Series, the SPCO will perform in 20 different venues across the metro area during the 2016-17 season. Since moving into its new downtown Saint Paul home, the Ordway Concert Hall, in 2015, the orchestra has maintained its commitment to geographic accessibility and continues to perform over half of its concerts outside of the new Concert Hall.

In addition to expanding its venues, the SPCO has made its concerts accessible by offering the most affordable ticket prices of any major orchestra, with more than 50 percent of seats available for \$12 or less in the 2015-16 season. Ticket prices were first reduced in the Neighborhood Series in 2005 and prices at remaining venues were decreased in 2010. The SPCO introduced its club2030 program in 2007, a free club that allows people in their 20s and 30s to get \$10 best available seats to as many concerts as they would like to attend. In 2012 the SPCO launched an innovative membership program in which patrons can attend an unlimited number of concerts for just \$5 per month. On top of this affordable pricing for regular SPCO concerts, the orchestra’s Target® Free Family Music Series offers special performances geared toward young children and families, and tickets are free for both adults and children, thanks to generous support from Target.

These past initiatives have allowed the SPCO to serve an expanding audience, over a time period when audiences have declined at many orchestras nationwide. Since the SPCO began lowering ticket prices in 2005 and expanding into new venues, the orchestra’s audience has grown by 44 percent.

“The New Generation Initiative is designed to break down barriers that prevent young people from attending, with a dual focus on affordable ticket prices and new concert experiences,” said Lindsey Thoreson Hansen, SPCO Director of Marketing and Communications. “While our halls are full and our audience has grown over the last several years, we still have work to do to build an audience that better reflects the diversity of our community. Young people are underrepresented in our audience compared to the Twin Cities population, and we believe that in order to fully serve our community, we must do more to engage young audiences.”

FREE TICKETS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

All child and student tickets free

The SPCO announced in April 2016 that children ages 6–17 can attend unlimited regular SPCO concerts free of charge starting in the 2016-17 season, with up to 4 free child tickets per paid adult ticket. With the announcement of the New Generation Initiative, the SPCO is further expanding access to young people by offering free student tickets for all regular SPCO concerts starting in the 2016-17 season. Children and students can get free tickets to as many SPCO concerts as they would like, with nearly the entire season available for free ticket reservations. Only a few special performances are excluded from this offer, such as holiday concerts, co-presentations and select Liquid Music Series performances.

How free child tickets work:

- Kids sit in any price seat, at any regular concert for FREE.
- Patrons can reserve up to 4 free child tickets per each paid adult ticket (children 17 and under must be accompanied by an adult).
- Families with kids under 6 years old are encouraged to attend Target Free Family Music events. Learn more at thespco.org/target.

How free student tickets work:

- Students sit in any price seat, at any regular concert for FREE.
- A valid student ID must be presented at will call to pick up tickets at the concert.

“Music has intrinsic value and can help us connect with our humanity, and there is also strong evidence that engagement with music at a young age has a profound impact on learning and development,” said SPCO Director of Education and Community Engagement Erin Jude. “In addition, when children participate in musical activities or attend concerts with the important adults in their lives, it presents a magical opportunity for shared discovery and connection. We are so pleased to offer multiple opportunities for young people to engage with classical music through our CONNECT music education program, Target Free Family Music series and now, our New Generation Initiative.”

Hansen added, “College students face many barriers to attendance, including tight budgets, busy schedules and limited transportation options if they don’t have a car on campus. These initiatives address all three barriers, offering free tickets to students, along with shortened concerts and performances at venues on or near college campuses.”

NEW CONCERT FORMATS

New SPCO at Icehouse Series

In addition to extremely affordable ticket prices, the New Generation Initiative includes efforts to create new, more casual concert experiences that appeal to younger audiences. After a highly successful performance of Schubert's String Quintet at Icehouse in March 2016, the SPCO will return to the restaurant/bar/music venue for a three-concert series during the 2016-17 season. Patrons will enjoy intimate chamber music performances, specialty cocktails and gourmet food all at once in this inviting and eclectic venue.

Icehouse owner and operator Brian Liebeck said of the series, "Our goal at Icehouse is to continue hosting an endless variety of performances and this new series with the SPCO helps us toward that goal, allowing us to branch out into classical music. Having such world class talent on our stage is humbling to say the least and it doesn't get any better than unamplified strings in this room. The added beauty of these shows is that they can attract a wide variety of patrons who have yet to experience the artistry of the SPCO. Hosting these concerts in a casual environment like Icehouse is the perfect way to help break down some of the preconceived notions that many young people hold about what it means to interact with classical music."

The SPCO will continue to explore other nontraditional venues throughout the Twin Cities for potential added series in future seasons.

"A chamber orchestra has a unique advantage over a full symphony orchestra in terms of its mobility and flexibility," said SPCO Artistic Director and Principal Violin Kyu-Young Kim. "We can fill up a concert hall stage for an epic Beethoven symphony, or pare ourselves down for an intimate performance of a Mendelssohn quartet and still provide an emotionally powerful experience for audience members. We believe that chamber music belongs everywhere, whether it is the Ordway Concert Hall or a bar in Minneapolis, and we want to bring our music to unexpected places where young people are already gathering."

The three-concert series at Icehouse this season will include the following performances:

Wynton Marsalis's *At the Octroon Balls*

Wednesday | Nov 9 | 7:00pm

Mendelssohn's String Quintet No. 1 and Nielsen's Wind Quintet

Thursday | Feb 23 | 7:00pm

Dvořák's *American Quartet*

Wednesday | Apr 26 | 7:00pm

A limited number of subscription tickets for SPCO at Icehouse are available at this time for \$60 per person for the three-concert series. The ticket price includes a drink of choice (wine, beer, craft cocktail or non-alcoholic house-made beverage) at each of the three concerts. Icehouse's gourmet American cuisine will also be available for purchase before, during and after the performance. Tickets for individual events will be available one month before each concert.

Happy Hour Concert

After a wildly popular trial run in April 2016, the SPCO will host a second Happy Hour Concert at the Ordway Concert Hall on Thursday, May 11, 2017. This special one-hour concert will feature Artistic Partner and violinist Pekka Kuusisto leading a program that brings together contemporary classical and traditional folk music. Along with a shortened performance, ticket-holders will be welcomed to a special happy hour before the concert from 4:30–6:00pm with drink specials and food available for purchase from various Twin Cities food trucks.

Happy Hour Concert with Pekka Kuusisto

Thursday | May 11 | 2017
Happy Hour 4:30–6:00pm
Concert 6:00–7:00pm

“We at the SPCO feel so passionately that ours is a living, breathing art form that can have a real emotional impact on anyone and everyone who experiences it, and we are striving to make our music more relevant and accessible to young people in our community,” said Kyu-Young Kim. “We want to dispel the stereotype that classical music is elitist and stuffy by playing with concert formats and performing in nontraditional venues. The SPCO at Icehouse Series and the Happy Hour Concert will allow us to reach young people for whom the traditional concert experience is unappealing. At the same time, those young people who *are* interested in the more traditional concert experience can attend regular SPCO concerts more often thanks to the free ticket and low ticket price initiatives we have announced today.”

Ticket presale for young audiences: August 9–16

In an effort to give young people access to the very best seats, the SPCO is offering young audiences an exclusive opportunity to purchase individual tickets to 2016-17 performances before tickets go on sale to the general public. Anyone ordering free child tickets, free student tickets or club2030 tickets may start purchasing online or by phone starting today (Tuesday, August 9). Tickets will be available to the general public starting Tuesday, August 16.

Tickets can be purchased online at thespco.org or by calling our Ticket Office at 651.291.1144. The Ticket Office is open 12pm–5pm Monday through Friday, and 11am–3pm Saturday.

ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Renowned for its artistic excellence, remarkable versatility of musical styles and adventurous programming, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is widely regarded as one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world. Entering its 58th season in September 2016, the SPCO has recently undergone transformational change with the opening of its new home, the Ordway Concert Hall, the addition of a new generation of players, and significant changes in the scope of its artistic vision. Committed to championing new music, the SPCO is primarily an uncondacted ensemble that works in close collaboration with a diverse series of artistic partners, who each bring their distinctive voice and creative vision to their work with the SPCO. The orchestra's current artistic partners are Jonathan Cohen, Jeremy Denk, Martin Fröst, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Pekka Kuusisto and Thomas Zehetmair. Past Artistic Partners include Roberto Abbado, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Douglas Boyd, Joshua Bell, Nicholas McGegan, Stephen Prutsman, Dawn Upshaw and Christian Zacharias.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 130 concerts and educational programs each year, and are regularly heard on public radio programs which reach 1.2 million listeners each week on 289 stations. Additionally, the SPCO reaches more than 200,000 listeners annually through its free online Listening Library. The SPCO has released 67 recordings, commissioned 146 new works, and tours nationally and internationally, including performances in premier venues in Europe, Asia and South America. Recent engagements in Berkeley, CA, New York's Carnegie Hall, the Ojai Festival, and tours to Scandinavia and Central and Eastern Europe were met with great critical acclaim. The SPCO will return to New York City this fall to give an uncondacted performance with pianist and Artistic Partner Jeremy Denk to open 92nd Street Y's 2016-17 concert season.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility, its innovative audience outreach efforts, and its educational and family programming. Regular subscription series are performed in a variety of different venues across the Twin Cities metropolitan area each season, a unique commitment to geographic accessibility for a major orchestra. The SPCO offers the most affordable tickets of any major orchestra in the United States, with over 50 percent of tickets available for \$12 or less. The orchestra also offers an innovative new ticket membership model in which members pay \$5 per month to attend unlimited concerts. The SPCO's award-winning CONNECT education program reaches over 5,000 students and teachers annually in 12 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools, and its Target Free Family Music program provides engaging and educational experiences for thousands of Twin Cities children and families each year. The SPCO's Liquid Music Series (named "Best of Classical" by *The New York Times*) creates a space for innovative new projects and iconoclastic artists in unique presentation formats and invites adventurous audiences to discover the new and the fascinating within the flourishing landscape of contemporary chamber music.

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