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WARD STARE

Critical acclaim for artist

“Resident conductor Ward Stare is by now familiar to St. Louis audiences for pops and Youth Orchestra performances. Friday night’s performance was his first regular St. Louis Symphony Orchestra subscription program. He definitely has the chops to conduct at that level. Stare is a compelling figure on the podium, clear in his commands and graceful in his movements and the music still sounds good with one’s eyes closed...The performance deserved the huge ovation it received from the large audience.”
- *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2009

“Stare demonstrated a fine rapport with the players and a real feel for the music, particularly in the program's three examples of Russian Romanticism: the final movement from Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade," Sergei Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Piotr Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" Fantasy-Overture. He invested them with finely-attuned balance and mature understanding. The Tchaikovsky, in particular, got a big, sweeping finish that managed to be lush and impressive, but not overblown. All the signs indicate that this is a young conductor who's going places.”
-*STL Post-Dispatch*, May 2009

“Ward Stare, the orchestra’s able young resident conductor, took Mr. Robertson’s place on the podium...Under Mr. Stare the musicians performed this circus of a score, which has parts for toy instruments, household items (paper bags that get blown up and popped) and hose pipes. More than fun, the piece touches the dark side of childhood fantasy during ethereal passages, wrong-note chorales and bursts of fearsomely pummeling rhythms.”
-*The New York Times*, April 2009

"...Stare was just terrific, leading the eclectic score with confidence and style; the musicians followed along perfectly."
-*STL Post-Dispatch*, April 2009

"At ease and assured in his surprise Carnegie Hall debut, Ward Stare led the orchestra in a dynamic performance that ranged from coaxing to merry to downright sinister."
-*MusicWeb International*, April 2009

“His conducting of Barber's 1942 piece was clear and vibrant, with a keen ear for phrasing, balance and pacing. Stare conveyed the music's lyrical outpourings and fugal gestures with equal aplomb, and he made fine contact with the players before him.”
-The *Plain Dealer*, August 2007

Ward Stare

KDHX.org • April 30, 2011

Exciting Tchaikovsky, exotic Scriabin with the St. Louis Symphony

BY CHUCK LAVAZZI

It has always seemed to me that one hallmark of a great orchestra is its ability to make a persuasive case not only for the standards of the repertoire but for more obscure works as well. It's one thing to present a polished performance of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (as the SLSO did last weekend); it's quite another to deliver an equally exciting reading of the less popular Concerto No. 2 and then follow it up with a compelling Scriabin Symphony No. 2, a work the symphony hasn't done in over forty years.

Although dwarfed in popularity by its predecessor, Tchaikovsky's Second is a work with ample charms of its own, starting with a slam-bang opening movement featuring a grandly optimistic first theme, a charmingly contrasting second, and long virtuoso passages for the piano that verge on the excessive. On Friday night, the audience expressed their admiration for soloist Stephen Hough by breaking into spontaneous applause at the end of that movement. I suspect Tchaikovsky would have approved—you can't generate that much excitement and then expect folks to sit on their hands.

Tchaikovsky also knew what he was about with the following *Andante non troppo*, which features a lyrical, quasi-operatic duet for violin and cello (beautifully rendered by David Halen and Daniel Lee). Maybe it's just the romantic in me, but I can't help but wonder whether the loving interaction of the two instruments wasn't Tchaikovsky's way of expressing his affection for his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, with whom he shared a long, intensely Platonic, and almost entirely epistolary relationship. Perhaps that's why he was particularly fond of the movement.

The final *Allegro con fuoco* wrapped everything up with more virtuoso fireworks, resulting in a well-deserved standing ovation for both Mr. Hough and Resident Conductor Ward Stare.

Mr. Stare is clearly a rising star in the conducting firmament. I had the pleasure of sharing the Powell Hall stage with him for Peter and the Wolf back in 2008 and he struck me then as a precise, no-nonsense but nevertheless good-humored presence on the podium who communicated effectively without undue theatrics. I saw nothing Friday night that would cause me to revise that opinion anywhere but upwards. It's a shame he's only doing one subscription program next season, even if it is a fascinating one combining music by Vivaldi, Schubert, and Osvaldo Golijov.

Mr. Stare really took the spotlight in the second half of the program, turning in a tremendously persuasive performance of Alexander Scriabin's sometimes discursive but always intriguing Symphony No. 2. The work dates from 1902, when Scriabin was still to some extent finding his own way as a composer, but the lush orchestration, restless harmonies, and orgiastic excess that characterize much of his orchestral music were already present. His eccentric personal philosophy and multi-media experiments such as the *Poem of Fire* (which included a "color organ" of his own design) were still in the future, but it's easy to hear their genesis in the exotic hothouse atmosphere of this work.

Laid out in either four or five movements (depending on how you count them) the Second is somewhat reminiscent of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, complete with elaborate bird calls from the flutes in the second movement, a violent thunderstorm in the third, and a blazing finale that brings back the sun in all its pantheistic glory. Scriabin's countryside sounds considerably more exotic and erotic than Beethoven's—this is the man who would write *The Poem of Ecstasy* a few years later, after all—but it's hard not to hear some parallels.

Ward Stare

KDHX.org • April 30, 2011

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Top-notch orchestras and conductors make the familiar seem new and the unfamiliar sound like something they've been doing all their lives. This weekend's concerts clearly place both the St. Louis Symphony and Ward Stare in that category. It's a pity that a larger crowd didn't turn out to hear them. Work of this quality deserves a wider audience.

No doubt that wider audience will turn out for the final concerts of the season May 5 through 8, when David Robertson will conduct the orchestra and chorus in Orff's ever-popular *Carmina Burana*, along with the world premiere of Christopher Rouse's *Symphony No. 3*. For more information, you can call 314-534-1700, visit slso.org, or follow [@slso](https://twitter.com/slso) on Twitter.

Ward Stare

St. Louis Post-Dispatch • April 29, 2011

SLSO, Stare and Hough triumph in Friday concert

By SARAH BRYAN MILLER

For the penultimate concerts of the 2010-2011 season, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra brought together a rising star and an established one for a satisfying musical whole.

SLSO resident conductor Ward Stare was clearly a phenomenal talent when he arrived here in 2008, but he has continued to mature and to refine his art to an impressive level. Stephen Hough - pianist, composer, MacArthur Fellow and author - is one of the finest exponents of the keyboard in our time.

Put the two of them together with this orchestra, and the results, heard at Friday morning's coffee concert, were outstanding.

Hough's vehicle was Piotr Illyich Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major. The first movement demands a big sound, and Hough provided it. His initial solo passage was a touch messy, but otherwise he was technically astounding in a hugely challenging work, his fingers a blur in the fast passages. Hough's energy never flagged, and neither did his commitment.

The second movement, Andante non troppo, brought extensive solo work for concertmaster David Halen and principal cello Daniel Lee. With Hough, they offered thoughtful, beautiful chamber music in the midst of a major orchestra work. The final movement is back to big - Allegro con fuoco - and Hough provided the fire demanded by the score, blazing along the keys.

Stare was assured and absolutely in charge throughout, collaborating with his soloist and with the orchestra. The musicians were in top form throughout the piece and across sections.

There was more fire to come in the second half, with Alexander Scriabin's passionate but rarely heard Symphony No. 2 in C minor. It had been performed by the SLSO only once before, in 1969.

The mystically minded Scriabin believed that particular keys represented particular colors, and he saw red in C, both major and minor. This is lush, supremely ardent, over-the-top Romantic music that almost scorched the ear in some passages. Scriabin comes off in many places as a Russian Richard Wagner, writing endless melodies and imaginative harmonies to fill the symphony's 40 minutes.

Although it has its lyrical moments, the second symphony is primarily a work dominated by big brass and busy strings. Happily, the SLSO's wind and brass players were in almost uniformly excellent voice. (And it's always good to see retired principal trumpet Susan Slaughter back in her old section.) The Friday morning audience responded enthusiastically.

Stare had the measure of the work, conducted with confidence and brought it through triumphantly. He is clearly a talent on his way up.

WARD STARE

New York Times • June 9, 2010

A Debut, an Anniversary and a Springboard for Young Players

BY VIVIEN SCHWEITZER

An exuberant cacophony greeted audience members entering Riverside Church before a concert by the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra on Tuesday evening, as ensemble members sat onstage energetically rehearsing. Significant collective and individual preparation had clearly gone into their terrific concert, the orchestra's New York debut appearance, celebrating the 40th anniversary of its founding by Leonard Slatkin, the former music director and now conductor laureate of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Ward Stare, music director of the youth ensemble (comprising musicians ages 12 to 22) and resident conductor of the St. Louis Symphony, has trained his charges exceptionally well. The string, woodwind, brass and percussion sections also received coaching from members of the New York Philharmonic before the concert, which was a benefit for the Riverside Food Pantry.

Mr. Stare inspired the musicians to impressive heights here, opening with a polished and suitably spirited rendition of Brahms's "Academic Festival Overture." Brahms described the work — written to thank the University of Breslau, then part of the German Empire, for giving him an honorary doctorate — as "a very boisterous potpourri of student songs."

The brass section, often the weakest link in a professional orchestra, shone in the first movement of Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony and throughout the evening. Mr. Stare also coaxed elegant phrasing and nuanced dynamic contrasts from the string players in the symphony, composed in 1830 for celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, a cornerstone of the Lutheran faith. (For various reasons that work was not presented during the festivities.) The woodwind players also performed well, with all sections meshing into a vigorous and expressive whole.

After intermission came Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," with elegantly rendered solos by Jecoliah Wang, the concertmaster, and Emma Kinsley, a violist. The second half also included a technically proficient and lively rendition of the Overture to Bernstein's "Candide" and concluded with a vivacious interpretation of Rimsky-Korsakov's colorful "Russian Easter Festival."



St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, with Ward Stare, the group's music director, at Riverside Church in Morningside Heights on Tuesday night.



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WARD STARE

St. Louis Post-Dispatch • June 8, 2010

SLSYO: Youth Orchestra in NYC

BY SARAH BRYAN MILLER

Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra director of communications Adam Crane happened to be in New York City over the weekend, when the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra made its first-ever journey there.

He dropped in on their rehearsal at enormous, historic Riverside Church, where they worked with conductor Ward Stare. Peggy Neilson, who runs the SLSYO, had everything under control.

“They sound great,” Crane reported via phone. “It’s pretty exciting.”

In a later email, he added

Ward went through all of the rep. today. Terrific acoustics in Riverside Church + a beautiful setting. Orchestra really sounded good once they adjusted to the differences from the Powell acoustics. Ward was very happy w/ the rehearsal. NY Times reviewing & apparently sending a photog. too. we’re all proud of the YO!

FYI – tomorrow they get a tour of Mannes and Manhattan School (the president of the Manhattan School, Bob Sirota, is giving them a talk personally!) Today was Juilliard. They also had tours of Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

NY Phil concert was Saturday night – according to Ward – “Sir Andrew Davis invited the entire orchestra backstage and spent about 15 minutes with them after the concert (had an impromptu Q&A with the students which was great!...they asked him lots of good questions.”

Students also went to Ground Zero....

Stare adds:

Started with Brahms, then Rimsky Korsakov....then Mendelssohn, Candide, Sleeping Beauty Waltz, and Thomas Tallis (in that order).

Kids sound great – they are acting very professional and playing at a VERY High level. I’d say they’ve stepped it up to really show NYC what they can do. I’ve been very pleased and extremely proud of them.

On Sunday, the orchestra had coaching sessions with members of the New York Phil....which was great for them. After it was all over, the coaches each came to me and were full of compliments about how well they play....they (ny phil people) were clearly impressed!

As far as reactions from the kids themselves: my favorite so far was today at the rehearsal break when one of our players came up to me wide-eyed and excited talking about the Mendelssohn symphony and the “Dresden Amen” theme he uses....we’ve been talking about it all year...and it sounds so great in this space. The student told me that when we played it in Riverside for the first time, and she looked up at me and saw all the Grand Gothic architecture all around us and the elevated statue of a crucifix over my shoulder she really ‘got it’...

It was really cool to see a reaction like that....and I think that sums it up for many of them, too....the energy was fantastic when we played the symphony....and that ‘Dresden Amen’ was STUNNING. Gave me goosebumps as I conducted it.

Ward Stare

St. Louis Post-Dispatch • June 8, 2010

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Ward Stare and the St. Louis
Symphony Youth Orchestra
rehearse at Riverside Church
(Photos by Adam Crane)



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WARD STARE

St. Louis Classical Examiner • May 29, 2010

SLSO's American celebration is a patriotic treat

By Bill Townsend

Patriotic music always sounds best when played by a great symphony orchestra. At least that's my not-so-humble opinion.

Friday night's "Casual Classics" concert at Powell Symphony Hall was like a Fourth of July pops concert, only without the flies.

On this Memorial Day weekend, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra featured an all-American agenda and gave every number on the program its just deserts, with a couple of encores for great measure.

Resident conductor Ward Stare—a confident, gifted young man—started the concert with "The Star-Spangled Banner." His "choir" (the audience) was in good voice throughout. The band played well, too.

Morton Gould's "American Salute" was a terrific kickoff, and it was followed by selections from the score of "The Red Pony" by Aaron Copland. The middle movement, "Walk to the Bunkhouse," was especially jaunty and worth the price of admission by itself. But there was more a-comin'.

A medley from "Oklahoma!" wrapped up half No. 1, with the crowd almost unable to keep from humming or singing along. This arrangement sounded crisp, and the SLSO played it with great style and enthusiasm.

A high-spirited "School for Scandal" overture by Samuel Barber opened the second portion of the evening. Stare called it one of his favorites, and it's truly one of Barber's masterworks. The SLSO made the conductor smile broadly.

The program got a bit more somber for the next two numbers. First, the theme from "JFK" by John Williams featured a beautifully haunting performance by trumpet Susan Slaughter, who is delaying retirement to play for the "Casual Classics" concerts, and we're delighted she has remained.

Stare dedicated the string section's performance of George Walker's "Lyric for Strings" to all of the men and women in the armed forces who have given their lives for our country. It was a moving tribute, to say the least.

During Richard Hayman's rousing "Servicemen on Parade," Stare invited current and retired members of each service branch to rise when they heard their theme song. It was stirring to see these people on their feet, and I'm so glad Stare gave the audience a chance to thank the soldiers for their service.

An "America, the Beautiful" singalong was next, followed by the "National Emblem March" by Edwin Bagley, with John Philip Sousa's "Liberty Bell March" closing out the program ... but not quite.

The "Col. Bogey March" got whistlers whistling during the first encore, and all the clappers in the audience got their wish as "Stars and Stripes Forever" closed out the show for real.

All of these numbers are familiar to the performers, but they played them with a fresh zeal that St. Louis should treasure. For this concert on a holiday weekend, the SLSO attracted a near full house. Let's hope that keeps up.

STAGE > online: For more news about the theater scene, go to gomemphis.com/news/arts/stage

Titans of music and human rights meet on common ground

> Tribute selections illustrate parallels between Martin Luther King Jr., composers

By Jon W. Sparks
Special to *The Commercial Appeal*

This is the 16th year the Memphis Symphony Orchestra has performed a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the program for this weekend's concerts is particularly powerful.

Unlike past concerts that often had a variety of tunes, the Masterworks performances will have only two: Mozart's Requiem and Mendelssohn's Fifth Symphony (The Reformation).

As choices go, these two masterpieces have a profound connection with the life and work of the civil rights leader they honor.

"The Mozart Requiem is a piece reserved to be performed in memory of someone of significance and certainly Dr. King fits that bill," says guest conductor Ward Stare.

Stare, who is in his second season as the resident conductor of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and music director of the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, is enthusiastic about this weekend's program.

"When I came into the project, the Requiem was in place for the second half of the concert. They asked what would work well in the first half and what immediately came to mind was Mendelssohn's Fifth, called the 'Reformation' symphony after the reforms led by Martin Luther (in the 16th century) who was Dr. King's namesake."

King was baptized Michael Luther King, Jr. after his birth in 1929.

Memphis Symphony
Orchestra Masterworks
Concert

Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5 in D Major, "Reformation"; Mozart's Requiem. Ward Stare, guest conductor; Kelley Nassief, soprano; Mary Phillips, mezzo-soprano; Randal Rushing, tenor; Andrew Wentzel, baritone; Memphis Symphony Chorus — Dr. Lawrence Edwards, director; Central High School Singers — Gaylon Robinson, director.

8 p.m. Saturday at the Cannon Center for the Performing Arts, 255 N. Main Street; tickets, \$15-\$78.
2:30 p.m. Sunday at Germantown Performing Arts Centre, 1801 Exeter Road; tickets, \$29 and \$45. Call 537-2525 or go to memphissymphony.org.

But in 1934, his father, influenced by the German theologian Luther, changed both their names.

"That's an important connection and Dr. King was well aware of it," Stare said, citing one of the clearest examples. Luther, in 1517, was demanding change in the Catholic Church establishment, famously posting his challenging 95 Theses on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The action spurred the Protestant

Reformation along with enormous social changes.

King, in 1966, spent a good deal of time in Chicago calling for an end to slums as well as an end to

discrimination in education and employment. On July 10th of that year, he spoke to 50,000 people at Soldier Field Stadium and then led most of them to City Hall where he attached a list of demands to the office door of then-mayor Richard Daley.

As for Mozart's Requiem, there is also a parallel with King's life.

The work was composed by Mozart on his deathbed but was uncompleted when he died in 1791. "The fact that it was left unfinished ties it in to Dr. King and his work which had come a long way but was and still is unfinished," Stare says.

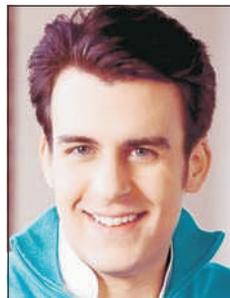
Furthermore, there are connections between the two composers.

"A lot of Mendelssohn's contemporaries saw him as the heir to Mozart's throne," Stare says. "Mendelssohn, like Mozart, was also a great prodigy, composing at a young age. He exhibited a complete mastery of older styles going back to Bach, but also forward looking in that he thought about programmatic music and writing in different styles."

And there is even a tragic connection among the three titans of music and humanity at the center of this weekend's concerts. "They died far too young — In their 30s. All had those things in common and we all wish they had lived much longer."

This year, the economy dictated that the MSO would have to charge for admission, said Ryan Fleur, MSO president and CEO. The concert had been free or low-cost in the past.

However, a diverse group of sponsors and supporters are making many tickets available. They include Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, St. Agnes Academy — St. Dominic School, St. George's Independent School, Smith & Nephew, Toof Commercial Printing, Elvis Presley Enterprises, Temple Israel, AT&T and the Marriott Downtown.



Ward Stare,
guest conductor



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110 South Fairfax Avenue, Ste 375, Los Angeles, CA 90036 | T 323 954 1776 | F 323 549 0155
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Ward Stare

St. Louis Post-Dispatch • November 28, 2009

SLSO gives powerful performance

BY SARAH BRYAN MILLER

Resident conductor Ward Stare is by now familiar to St. Louis audiences for pops and Youth Orchestra performances. Friday night's performance was his first regular St. Louis Symphony Orchestra subscription program.

He definitely has the chops to conduct at that level. Stare is a compelling figure on the podium, clear in his commands and graceful in his movements and the music still sounds good with one's eyes closed.

The program paired two 20th-century works — Samuel Barber's thoughtful "Second Essay for Orchestra" and music from Serge Prokofiev's ballet "Romeo and Juliet" — with a Late Romantic symphony, Antonin Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, "From the New World."

The Barber opened the concert, and was in some ways its most completely satisfying piece, beginning in as melancholy a mode as autumn, and working its way to joy. After a couple of infelicitous moments early on, the orchestra came together strongly.

Rather than choosing one of the familiar suites from Prokofiev's score, Stare put together his own, in the order they would be heard in the ballet. That provided a nice dramatic arc, but at a cost: "The Death of Tybalt" was composed to end Act II and cries out for applause. Since it hits at the three-quarter mark in the suite, Stare gave a spoken introduction to the suite in order to ask for silence after it.

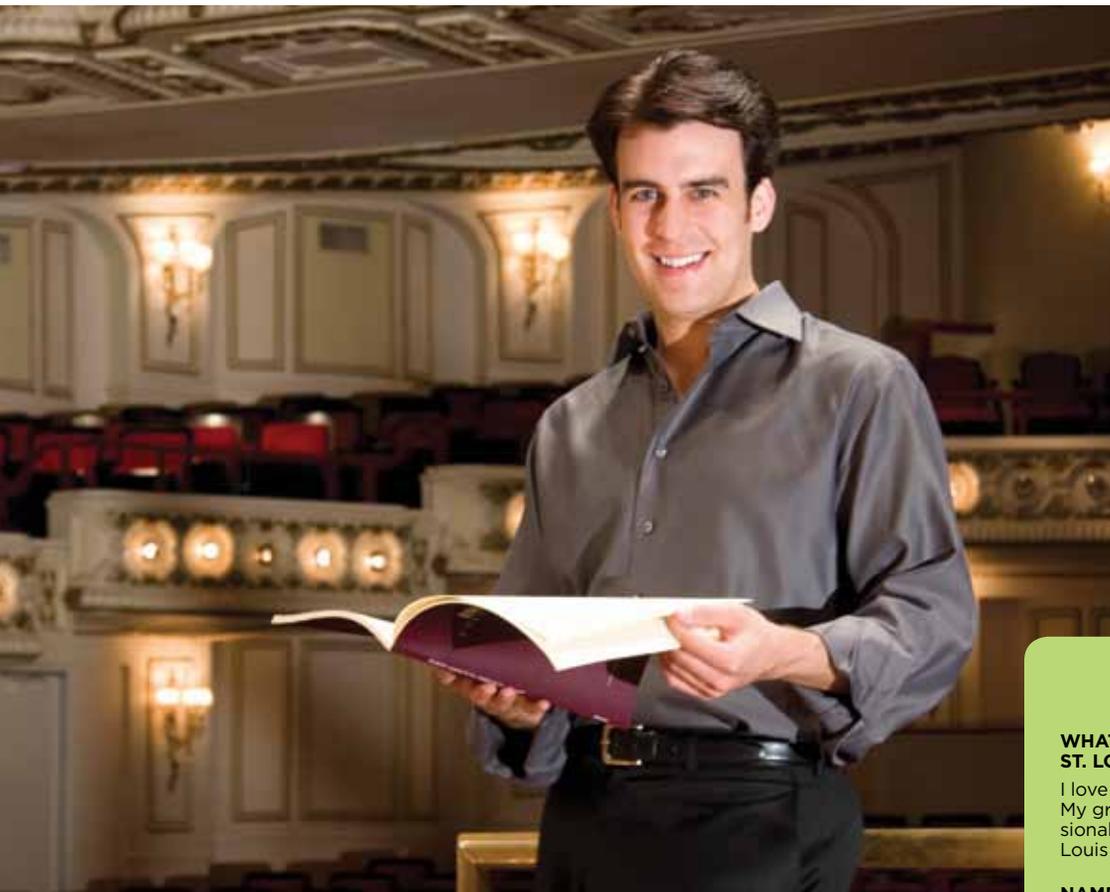
Dvorak filled the second half. English horn Carolyn Banham played the familiar "Going home" theme beautifully, and most of her colleagues offered strong playing as well, a little scrappiness from the upper strings (early on) and the horns (sporadically) aside.

The performance deserved the huge ovation it received from the large audience. That brought an encore: No. 8 from Dvorak's "Slavonic Dances," vividly and accurately played.

Culture Watch

By Natalie Kurz | Photo by Jillian Kyle

Getting to know the gifted, young and, dare we say, charming new Saint Louis Symphony resident conductor Ward Stare.



This record-breaking musician and conductor's career all started with a vinyl record. Around the age of five, Ward Stare's curiosity led his father to play one of the large discs—a Beethoven symphony—and the next several weekends were spent listening, learning and questioning the maestro's oeuvre. "I never imagined doing anything else," said Stare, 26, when asked when he decided to pursue music as a profession.

{ Q + A }

QUESTION QUARTET

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ST. LOUIS PASTIME?

I love going to Cardinals games. My grandfather was a professional baseball player, and St. Louis is a great baseball town.

NAME THREE THINGS YOU'RE DYING TO DO.

I'd love to conduct a full cycle of Wagner's "The Ring," dive in the Mediterranean to find shipwrecks—I'm a certified scuba diver and love the water!—and, I don't know if you want to print this, but I'd like to meet someone. I've been single for two years; it's really hard to have a relationship with my crazy schedule.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?

Probably horse sashimi. I was in a Japanese town where that was kind of their signature thing. I ate it with chopsticks!

TELL US SOMETHING CRAZY ABOUT YOURSELF.

I don't mind tigers, bears, sharks—I actually love Shark Week on Discovery and can't wait to cage dive with Great Whites someday—but I'm afraid of raccoons. I saw a few rabid ones in the woods when I was a kid, and to this day they just creep me out.

He learned to play the trombone (like his father) around nine and took his first paid gig at an astonishing 10 years old with his dad's fireman's band, playing in parades for \$20 a pop. A half-dozen years later, he graduated high school and enrolled at Juilliard at 16, an unheard of age for such a talented trombonist. At 18, he broke records, becoming the youngest principal brass player at any major U.S. orchestra when he joined the Lyric Opera of Chicago as the principal trombonist—ironic, since he almost wasn't allowed to play as a kid because his arms were too short.

Stare's musical curiosity kept churning and he soon got bit by the conducting bug. "The only thing better than playing in an orchestra is conducting one," he admitted. Never one to sit on his laurels, he spent the next several years dividing his time between the orchestra and Europe, where he spent six-month stints learning from conducting greats in Paris, Germany, London, Moscow and Finland. After taking top conducting prizes two years running at the esteemed Aspen Music Festival, he retired from performing—at the ripe ol' age of 25—to focus solely on conducting.

Before he was appointed as the Saint Louis Symphony's first resident conductor in 2008—besting more than 250 candidates across the country—Stare appeared at the helm of the Cleveland Orchestra, the Moscow Chamber Orchestra during their 2007 North American Tour and the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra as part of a celebration for the King of Thailand's 80th birthday. He was also designated as the music director of the Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra, where he leads 100 talented 12- to 22-year-olds in several concerts a year. "Youth orchestras were an important part of my education," said Stare. "This is my chance to give back."

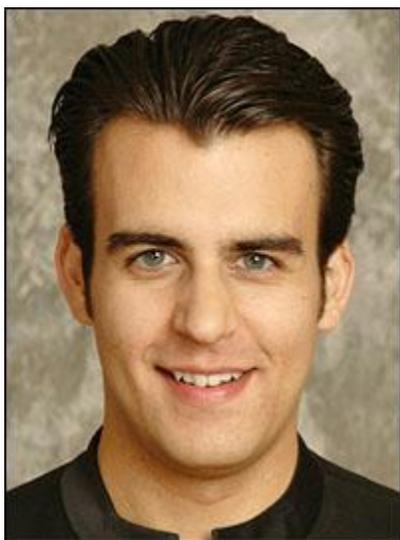
As the resident conductor, he'll start this season at the symphony with a full-throttle week from September 16-27 where he'll be conducting three concerts including the Kinder Konzert featuring Britten's The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, a free Forest Park concert to kick off the Balloon Glow and the special multi-media concert The Blue Planet Live! For more information or to purchase tickets, visit sloso.org.

Ward Stare

PlaybillArts • November 21, 2008

Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra: Sonic Youth

BY JEANNETTE COOPERMAN



Ward Stare

Ward Stare has become the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra's Resident Conductor. The 26-year-old also leads the Youth Orchestra.

Seven-year-old Ward Stare tilted the album jackets out one by one, staring at the bold letters and intent faces on their covers. "Pick one and we'll play it," his dad finally offered, and Stare passed through all the jazz and blues and psychedelic rock 'n' roll and plucked Beethoven.

"I made him keep putting on more Beethoven, all the symphonies, that day," Stare recalls, "and when I found out Beethoven was deaf when he wrote half of them, that just blew me away." He begged his teacher to let him do a presentation on Beethoven; slightly taken aback, she agreed. "The other kids sat around sort of kicking their legs," he recalls, "probably not a hundred-percent interested in what I was saying. But I was really interested in trying to tell them."

When it came time to pick an instrument, Ward picked the trombone, because that's what his father played for fun in a local band. In no time, Ward was very, very good. And one night, he and his dad walked into the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra boutique and happened to meet Dr. David Harman, Music Director of the RPO Youth Orchestra.

Ward's dad explained in a rush that his son was 11, probably too young for the Youth Orchestra but immensely talented and eager... "Well, have him audition," said the director, skeptical but looking for an escape. Soon after, a quaking Ward auditioned—and was accepted.

Now, 15 years later, he's been named Resident Conductor of the SLSO, and will direct the acclaimed Saint Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. SLSO Music Director David Robertson first met Stare last January. Stare was a conducting fellow at the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Robertson was guest conductor; together, they lead the Philharmonic in Ives's *Central Park in the Dark*, and Robertson "saw the complete control he had, the ability to do what is an almost mystical thing: I start, he starts, and we have to finish in the same place, and there's no way you can do it without complete trust. If it's working, it's magic, and if it's not, it's very hard to fix. That, to me, seems exactly the type of relationship one wants with a conductor, where it just works. So I was delighted when he put his candidature forward."

Stare trained at the Juilliard School and became Principal Trombone for the Lyric Opera Chicago at 18. But he'd wanted to conduct since—well, since Beethoven. At 21, an idea seized him: "We have a 26-week season, I'm young, and I have the resources; why am I not doing this?" He flew to Paris and studied conducting with private teachers at the Paris Conservatory and L'Ecole Normale. He has since conducted the Cleveland Orchestra, the

WARD STARE

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Moscow Chamber Orchestra, and the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, and he will conduct the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester in Berlin this spring.

Also a teacher, Stare coached the Chicago Youth Symphony brass section and has taught trombone since high school. “One thing I’ve always tried to do is emphasize the musical point of view—what you’re trying to say,” he remarks. “You do need to know where to put the bow, where to put the fingers, but if you get stuck in that technical minutiae, you lose the big picture, and the joy of the music-making starts to evaporate.”

What he wants young musicians to have, first and foremost, is “the experience of playing great music at a really high level in a wonderful hall with friends. Most people don’t have that experience ever. The only people I’m in touch with from my teenage years were in the youth orchestra, not even in my own school. And the youth orchestra in St. Louis is a very, very good orchestra; there are only a few in the country in the same class.”

Not all its members will go on to careers as professional musicians, but all will be changed by the music, he predicts. “Music can help people look a bit deeper into their lives. It’s thought-provoking; it stimulates introspection and can bring out people who are very shy. It leads to discoveries.”

Stare spent two summers at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he won conducting prizes and studied with David Zinman (who will conduct Berlioz’s *The Damnation of Faust* with the SLSO April 17 and 18). “He taught me about the architecture,” Stare says, referring to a conductor’s responsibility for building an edifice in which every note relates to the whole. “He also really knows how an orchestra works—how in a certain passage, you need to look at the basses here to move this phrase. Little insights you can only get from experience.”

For his part, Zinman says what he noticed about Ward was “whenever I gave him a suggestion, he could take it and learn from it, make something of it. That’s not always the case!” Asked how Stare has changed under his tutelage, Zinman mentions “his command on the podium. Before he was flailing a bit; now he knows what he’s doing.”

Stare chuckles. “I used to be leaning and bending to get closer to the musicians, and he finally got me to stop. ‘Quit squatting!’ he’d say. And now that I’ve said that I’ll probably do it again.”

Ward Stare

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Young conductor is 'living large' with the Symphony

BY SARAH BRYAN MILLER

"Music chose me," Ward Stare says.

At 5, he became entranced with Beethoven. At 10, he earned his first paycheck as a musician. At 16, he graduated from high school and entered Juilliard. At 18, he became principal trombone with one of the world's top opera companies. At 22, he made his conducting debut with a professional ensemble.

And at 25, he was named resident conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. He makes his debut with the Symphony in a free outdoor concert of familiar favorites (even if you can't name the composers, you'll recognize the tunes) Thursday night on Art Hill on the eve of the annual Balloon Glow.

Stare grew up in Rochester, N.Y., in a music-loving family. His father, Daniel, is a retired chemical engineer and amateur trombonist. His mother, Susan, is an elementary school teacher. His younger sister Stephanie grew up playing string bass and piano.

He started taking piano lessons at age 5. Little League took over for a few years, but at 9 he began trombone lessons and proved a natural.

His father played trombone in a uniformed firefighters' band, marching in parades. After the younger Stare had been playing just a year, the band had a vacancy and let him march — right in the middle of the front row for symmetry — and paid him \$20 a parade.

"For a 10-year-old boy, that was living large," Stare said.

Music became his life. He finished high school early and went to the Juilliard School at 16. After a year and a half, he left for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

"Everything was sort of on a truncated timetable," he said. "But I was gainfully employed at a world-class opera house, the second-largest in the country."

Everett Zlatoff-Mirsky, who was concertmaster of the Lyric when Stare hired on, was concerned about how such a young player would fare as leader of a seasoned brass section.

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"Ward got the ultimate (accolade): 'He's doing the job,'" Zlatoff-Mirsky said. Stare was "very mature, and a fantastic musician."

With a 26-week opera season, Stare's two other interests — conducting and composing — beckoned.

Four years ago, Stare realized that there was nothing holding him back, that he had the time, the resources and the opportunity. Admitted to a small college in Paris, he lived there for almost the entire off-season, studying privately, working on his French and getting hooked on conducting. He returned the following summer for master classes in conducting in Finland, Moscow, London and the south of France.

"I call it my extreme a la carte education," Stare said.

Armed with videotapes of himself conducting orchestras, he applied to the Aspen Music Festival's American Academy of Conducting. Studying there during the summers of 2006 and last year, he won both top prizes. Last year, he was the League of American Orchestras' Conducting Fellow at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This year, he'll assist the Lyric's music director, Sir Andrew Davis, with two operas.

Stare played six full seasons at the Lyric.

"When I retired, at the age of 25, I was still the youngest person in the orchestra," Stare said.

The Symphony has expanded the role of assistant conductor to create a new position — resident conductor — for Stare. In addition to leading the Forest Park concert and holiday concerts, Stare will conduct many concerts for students and serve as music director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. He'll also assist music director David Robertson in special projects.

Next season, Stare will lead the orchestra in some subscription concerts. Meanwhile, Stare, who is single, is taking some time to get to know the city and hopes to catch some Cardinals games.

One thing he's not doing? Playing the trombone.

"It's in my closet," he said. "I see it each morning when I pick out a shirt."