

‘Classical music should reflect the society we live in:’ Chamber Project returns for 10th year

[Kelly Moffitt](#)



Can the story of the famed Dred Scott decision be effectively put to music? In this tenth year of the [Chamber Project Saint Louis](#), composer Adam Manness is giving it a try.

The first concert of the season, titled “Faith,” features the world premiere of Manness’ “The Devil and the Law,” a work commissioned by Chamber Project based on the Dred Scott case. In it, Manness uses voice, string quartet and flute, transitioning in sound from the darkness of the decision itself to a powerful reflection by Frederick Douglass on the case, ending on a note of hope.

Dana Hotle, a clarinetist and co-artistic director of Chamber Project, said the concert will combine this composition with [Manness’ “Delmar Wall”](#) for a

night of reflection on the idea of faith and the history of St. Louis. It will be performed at the Missouri History Museum in connection with the current exhibition “#1 in Civil Rights, the African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis.”

Chamber Project Saint Louis embarks on its 10th season by paying homage to St. Louis, the good and the bad, in a series of seven concerts. St. Louis on the Air contributor Steve Potter spoke with contributors to this year's performances.

It falls into the entire theme of the season, consisting of seven concerts held at varying venues across St. Louis, which addresses St. Louis and its place in the world.

“We decided with our 10th season is that we wanted to celebrate St. Louis because the mission of Chamber Project is to build community in St. Louis,” Hotle said. “We employ over 20 artists and musicians in St. Louis and we keep it local. The community has supported us so much in the past 10 years, we wanted to celebrate that.”

Chamber Project violinist Kyle Lombard said he appreciates the ensemble’s casual feel, accessibility and commitment to putting the best classical music product on stage.

“For aficionados, these performances add context to works they already know,” Hotle said. “For people who are new to the genre, these concerts give them context to feel like they’re on the inside. One of the things we started with in the Chamber Project was trying to frame music that makes it accessible to everyone. A lot of that is telling a story through the music and finding stories people can relate to. What is the story behind the music? What will you connect to?”

Part of that means putting the music in different venues than classical music is typically played in. In this season, concerts will take place in venues

ranging from the Missouri History Museum, The Chapel near Washington University's campus, the Schlafly Tap Room and the Vino Gallery.

Such a change-up in venue also brings the performers closer together, said Lombard.

“As a violinist, I’m always thinking about the space I’m playing, projection,” Lombard said. “The connection that we feel with Chamber Project is what is really special. When you’re thrown into a brand new acoustic, it is a challenge for players to stay connected to one another.”

Concert themes this season range from faith to architecture to protest to environmentalism, but Hotle said the key to this season is its diversity in the composers and performers highlighted.

“We are very passionate that our art form of classical music should reflect the society we live in,” Hotle said. “It doesn’t need to disregard the classical, great, white European composers, to include their stories in the way they are relevant today, but also to include as many diverse people as possible: women, people of color. That’s what will keep this art form alive, if they can connect this music, this art form, to their lives.”

Chamber Project is also hosting a docent led tour of the Missouri History Museum’s exhibition “#1 in Civil Rights, the African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis” September 6 at 7:00 p.m. Register [here](#).

Related Event

What: Chamber Project Saint Louis Presents "Faith"

When: Friday, Sept. 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Missouri History Museum, Lindell Boulevard and DeBaliviere Avenue in Forest Park, 5700 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis

[More information](#).

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