



Media Alert

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 19, 2012

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Arda, an ensemble of St. Louis Symphony Orchestra musicians, will perform for English as Second Language (ESL) students at the International Institute of St. Louis (3654 S. Grand Blvd.) on Tuesday **January 17, at 11am**. It is one of many free educational and community programs co-sponsored this year by the Symphony's *Music without Borders* grant project.

According to Anita Barker, International Institute Vice President and Director of Education, the special program is, "like a celebration. We spend so much time teaching students the information and language skills they need to live and work in the United States. A special event like the *Arda* performance is an additional educational experience that introduces them to the outstanding cultural experiences that exist for everyone in St. Louis, but that our students might not otherwise have the opportunity to enjoy."

The name *Arda* comes from the writing of J.R.R. Tolkien and means "world" in the fullest sense. Its members represent eclectic musical traditions, and the performance will feature special arrangements of music colored by Latin, Appalachian bluegrass, Eastern European folk, and jazz influences. Recalling a previous visit by *Arda*, Barker said, "At the same time they are giving us this beautiful experience, they celebrate the culture of the students."

In addition to a worldwide range of musical influences, the group includes an immigrant among its members. Violinist Manuel Ramos, originally from Mexico, even attended English classes at the International Institute many years ago. When Ramos, along with the other *Arda* members, performs at the International Institute, the special connection of people to music will be felt among students representing 75 different ethnicities from countries including Afghanistan, Bhutan, Congo, Cuba, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, and more!

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Annually, the International Institute of St. Louis helps thousands of immigrants become more integrated into America. We teach English, resettle refugees, help newcomers find jobs, and provide orientation, translation and other supportive services. We also produce the popular Festival of Nations, annually drawing a crowd of 125,000+ to honor and celebrate our community's growing cultural diversity. Immersion, investment and inclusion are our three pillars of service. They offer a solid structure to build positive relationships between newcomers and long-time Americans. www.iistl.org