



Chris Peimann
Director of Advancement
cpeimann@TheSheldon.org

Sarah Samples
Marketing Manager
ssamples@TheSheldon.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2021

**SHELDON ANNOUNCES \$3 MILLION DOLLAR GIFT FROM ESTATE OF ANN LEE AND WILL KONNEKER
- Gift Earmarked for Special Projects Including Remodel and Renaming of Louis Spiering Room -**

ST. LOUIS – The Sheldon is honored to announce that long-time board member Wilfred Konneker, who passed away in 2016, and his wife Ann Lee, who passed away in 2020, have bequeathed a \$3 million gift to The Sheldon for special improvement projects. Major updates will begin in December 2021 with the remodel and renaming of the 650 person-capacity Louis Spiering Room, which will be renamed “The Konneker Room” in honor of the beloved couple. This donation is the largest individual gift ever made to The Sheldon.

“The Konnekers’ generosity over the past 25 years helped shape The Sheldon into the important cultural institution it is today,” says Sheldon Board Chair Jim Watson. “This donation is transformational and will allow The Sheldon to make exciting improvements that will create an even more welcoming experience for our guests. We look forward to using this gift to extend the Konnekers’ amazing legacy.”

Sheldon Executive Director Peter Palermo adds, “Everyone should know what the Konnekers did for the St. Louis community. Their longtime, foundational support for organizations like The Sheldon, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, COCA, the Saint Louis Art Museum and more will continue to enhance our city’s culture for generations to come.”

The newly renamed Konneker Room will make its public debut at The Sheldon’s Gala on April 2, 2022, after undergoing Improvements.

Designed by SPACE Architecture + Design, the new Konneker Room will reflect the warm, comfortable atmosphere of the Sheldon Concert Hall, with design elements inspired by the work of Sheldon architect Louis Spiering. With a modern update on Spiering’s Arts and Crafts style, the room’s materials will feature the rich blues, terra cotta and cream in the iconic William Morris tapestry, “Strawberry Thief,” while copper accents will complement the existing west wall, featuring salvaged brick and terra cotta from Eames and Young’s Title Guaranty Building - built in downtown St. Louis in 1898 and demolished in 1983. The ceiling will be raised down the main axis of the space and painted white with elegant new feature lighting added.

MORE...

“Our goal is to create a lighter, airier space that feels like a natural extension of the concert hall and galleries,” says Shelley Satke Niemeier, co-owner and interior designer for SPACE Architecture + Design. “Louis Spiering said, ‘A good design must first of all solve the specific problem in regard to its practical requirements, meet the prescribed needs of its usefulness...[be] convenient, economical and beautiful.’ Our team takes the same approach.”

Dates are now open for event bookings beginning in April 2022 through The Sheldon's director of events at 314-533-9900 ext. 11 or rbolland@thesheldon.org. For more information on the new Konneker Room, visit TheSheldon.org/KonnekerRoom.

Additional improvement projects, scheduled to be completed over the next three-five years, include:

- Upgrades to the sound and lighting technology in the concert hall
- New exterior lighting and signage
- A remodel of the Kemper Atrium lobby and gallery spaces
- Improvements in office and administrative spaces
- The construction of a recording and podcast studio beneath the concert hall

Will Konneker joined the Sheldon Arts Foundation board in 1997 and served for 19 years, including 3 years as chair, from 2001-2004, when he spearheaded a \$3 million capital campaign for the organization. Married for 70 years, Will and Ann Lee moved to St. Louis in the 1940s, where Will earned a doctorate in nuclear physics from Washington University in 1950. He went on to launch several successful companies in St. Louis, and together he and Ann Lee fostered their philanthropic endeavors, born out of a shared love of music, art, nature, education and travel. The Konnekers supported organizations throughout St. Louis and across the country, including the Center of Contemporary Arts (COCA), Dance Saint Louis, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the St. Louis Symphony, The Sheldon, Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri History Museum, the St. Louis Zoo, Washington University, Ohio University and The Ohio State University.

The Sheldon opened its doors in 1912 as the home of the Ethical Society, and today, the concert hall is known around the world for its perfect acoustics. The Sheldon presents the best in jazz, folk, classical, world music and more in its 700-seat auditorium, and the adjoining Sheldon Art Galleries present world-class exhibits featuring local, national and international artists. During the 2020-2021 season, over 70,000 young people engaged in Sheldon education programs and, overall, 125,000 individuals participate in over 350 events each year at The Sheldon.

With a mission to provide the St. Louis community and beyond with “Arts Without Borders,” The Sheldon breaks down barriers, making music and visual art accessible to art.

###