

**Agendum
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
June 27, 2025**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR LEONARD SLATKIN
A Recommendation**

1. **Division and Department:** Academic Affairs, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.
2. **Introduction:** In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

Leonard Slatkin's contributions have impacted people globally. As a former Music Director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and its current Music Director Laureate, Maestro Slatkin has demonstrated the highest level of achievement in raising the cultural scene of the Detroit Metropolitan area to a qualitatively new level and making a lasting impact on musicians and music lovers in Southeast Michigan, in the United States, and globally.

In 1979, Maestro Slatkin started his 17-year tenure at the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. His dedication resulted in the orchestra attaining national acclaim and securing numerous prestigious recording contracts with Telarc, RCA, and EMI. His impact on the hitherto regional orchestra is self-evident. Under Slatkin's baton, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra won seven Grammy awards, including those for the best classical orchestral recording of Prokofiev's 5th Symphony (1984) and Barber's 1st Symphony and Piano Concerto (1991). Slatkin's Saint Louis years highlighted the virtues that make him stand out among conductors of several generations. Slatkin established himself as a conductor of a universal scope from standard orchestral repertoire (Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky) to contemporary classical music, including living composers. His recording legacy of American classical music (Copland, Bernstein, Piston, Anderson, Barber, Hanson, Williams, Bolcom, Gershwin) is virtually unparalleled in the output of any single conductor. It indicates his rare ability to explore the repertoire without prejudice and bring to light undeservedly neglected works through the highest level of musicianship reflected in his universally excellent discography. Altogether, Slatkin premiered 220 compositions of contemporary classical composers. Slatkin's work with several major orchestras in the United Kingdom, first and foremost the BBC Concert Orchestra, the London Philharmonic

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Orchestra, and the Philharmonic Orchestra, is a remarkable display of transcending the boundaries of national pride and superstition. It is unparalleled that an American conductor would set a standard in the recorded history of the music by Elgar and Vaughan Williams and offer an exemplary rendition of Haydn's London symphonies. Leonard Slatkin's 10-year tenure with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (2008-2018) was an exemplary combination of superb musicianship, community building and engagement, and global outreach. His recording legacy with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra shows the same strengths as those in Saint Louis. However, several aspects of his Detroit tenure are unique. In Detroit, he perfected the ability to intelligently plan not only individual concerts but entire seasons by thoughtfully combining the hallmarks of the orchestral repertoire with the works of living American composers, including several world premieres. Following the six-month strike in the 2010-2011 season, he rebuilt the orchestra and made it "a point of civic pride" by launching a free worldwide web streaming of its concerts. In addition to being a conductor of national and international acclaim, Leonard Slatkin is a prolific author. He has written five books on conducting and numerous articles and reviews. His remarkable achievements translate into pedagogy through his teaching at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Maestro Slatkin maintained a valuable connection with Oakland University through the Meadow Brook Music Festival, including his appearance with DSO and the music of Beethoven, Gershwin and Bolcom over several seasons of this event on the Oakland University grounds.

Maestro Slatkin's impact on the culture scene of the Detroit Metropolitan area and Oakland University is lasting and profound. Based on his numerous outstanding achievements in performance, orchestral training, recording, music education, and scholarship, we recommend that Leonard Slatkin be awarded a Doctor of Music, honoris causa, from the College of Arts and Sciences at the December 13, 2025, at 2 PM ceremony.

3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.

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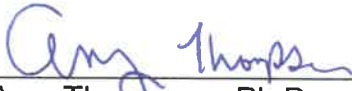
8. **Recommendation:**

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees award the honorary degree of Doctor of Music *Honoris Causa* to Leonard Slatkin.

9. **Attachments:** None.

Submitted to the President

on 6/16, 2025 by

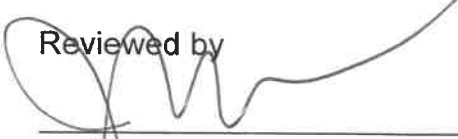


Amy Thompson, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 6/18, 2025
to the Board for Approval by



Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President

Reviewed by


Joshua D. Merchant, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and
Secretary to the Board of Trustees