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America's Orchestra: Celebrating 125 Years of the Boston Pops

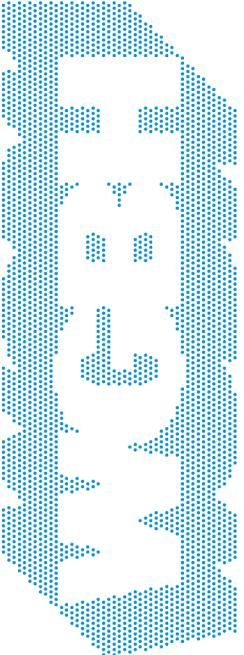
Available to PBS stations nationwide in June check local listings

WGBH presents a star-studded celebration of the Boston Pops, featuring some of the greatest moments from the Boston Pops 125-year history. Hosted by Craig Ferguson and conceived and produced by Susan Dangel, with co-producer Dick Bartlett, *America's Orchestra: Celebrating 125 Years of the Boston Pops* tells the orchestra's story—from its beginnings as summertime entertainment for Bostonians to its impressive rise to the national icon and beloved institution it is today. The program will be broadcast on PBS stations across the country beginning in June (check local listings).

"Celebrating its 125th anniversary this spring, the Boston Pops Orchestra performs the best music of the past and present, appealing to the widest possible audience with a broad spectrum of styles, from jazz to pop, indie rock to big band, film music to the great American songbook, and Broadway to classical, making it the perfect orchestra for people who don't know they like orchestras!" said Boston Pops Conductor Keith Lockhart. "We hope that the upcoming PBS special reflects this diversity and gives viewers a glimpse into the storied history of this distinctively Boston creation—one of our country's greatest cultural treasures, as vibrant today as it was when it was founded in 1885."

"WGBH has had a long and wonderful history with the Boston Pops Orchestra both on television and radio," said Laurie Donnelly, the executive producer of Lifestyle Programming at WGBH, which is distributing the program to PBS stations nationwide. "We are delighted to now be celebrating the 125 years that have made it a critical part of the arts landscape in Boston and nationwide."

Affectionately known as "America's Orchestra," the Boston Pops is the most recorded and arguably the most beloved orchestra in the country, beginning with the establishment of the modern-era Pops by Arthur Fiedler and continuing through the innovations introduced by John Williams and the new-millennium Pops spearheaded by Keith Lockhart. *America's Orchestra: Celebrating 125 Years of the Boston Pops* illustrates how these three maestros and the musicians of the Boston Pops Orchestra made their way into the hearts and minds of music lovers throughout New England and across the nation. The Boston Pops 125 documentary was made possible by a grant from the Mugar Foundation.



In a highlight of the documentary, Peter Fiedler, son of Arthur Fiedler, provides a rare personal glimpse into the man who brought the Pops to the national stage through hugely successful recordings and the highly acclaimed, award-winning series *Evening at Pops* on PBS. Through incredible charisma and a keen marketing sensibility, Arthur Fiedler brought virtually every major American performer of his era (1930-1979) to the Pops stage, including Ella Fitzgerald, The Carpenters, Benny Goodman, and Roberta Flack, all of whom are featured in seldom-seen archival performance footage. In a rare, up-close interview, John Williams speaks about the remarkable contribution of Arthur Fiedler, whose incredible success made all future endeavors with the Pops possible. Mr. Williams also describes what the Boston Pops has meant to him over the course of his life, but especially in contrast to his extraordinary career as a film composer. In the documentary John Williams describes the Pops as "...the greatest musical mix master of all time." The program shows John Williams working with Bonnie Raitt and John Raitt in footage that features father and daughter singing together for the first time in a performance of Irving Berlin's "They Say It's Wonderful." John Williams and the Pops are also joined by such titans of the music world as Ray Charles, Johnny Cash, and Rosemary Clooney, all of whom perform the iconic hits for which they are best known. And no reflection on John Williams's contribution to the Pops would be complete without footage of some of the most memorable film moments he's brought to the Pops over the years.

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Keith Lockhart (1995-present), who from the first time he stepped onto the podium was recognized for the incredible energy and vitality he brought to the Pops, reflects on the importance of the Pops as entertainment and his commitment to programming that appeals to music lovers across all levels of experience and musical tastes. In a candid and insightful moment, Keith Lockhart describes the giant sense of responsibility he felt in taking up the Pops mantle, wanting to respect the great accomplishments of his predecessors while at the same time carving his own path forward with the orchestra. Showing his commitment to continuing the orchestra's collaboration with the great artists of our day, Keith Lockhart is seen leading the Pops in performances with such musical stars as Audra McDonald, k.d. lang, Michael Feinstein, and Kristin Chenoweth, who sings "For Good," one of her signature songs from *Wicked*, for which she created the role of Glinda. This special program also features interviews and/or performances by Josh Groban, James Taylor, Vanessa Williams, Yo-Yo Ma, Wynton Marsalis, and Roberta Flack. Rare footage of favorite artists past and present, including Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Patti LaBelle, as well as Broadway stars Ethel Merman, Bernadette Peters, Nathan Lane, and Jerry Herman will also be featured.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF 125TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

The 125th anniversary season of the Boston Pops celebrate the orchestra's incredibly rich tradition of performing the great music of this country's past and present. The season opens on May 4 with a gala concert featuring multiple Tony Award-winner **Idina Menzel** and the inimitable **Doc Severinsen**, who holds the distinction of having performed under the batons of **Arthur Fiedler**, **John Williams**, and **Keith Lockhart**—a perfect addition to a program honoring the artistic vision of the three most famous Boston Pops conductors. In addition to the **world premiere** of the new work in honor of the Kennedy brothers, the season will mark the 10th anniversary of the popular radio and TV show "**From the Top**," focus on esteemed artists from the fields of jazz, musical theater, and pop, including **Dave Brubeck**, **Kelli O'Hara**, and **Maureen McGovern**, and honor the legacies of such musical titans as **Ray Charles**, **Duke Ellington**, **Cole Porter**, and **Rodgers and Hammerstein**. **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, who in concert melds his classical music roots with his own Haitian-American cultural references and vibrant musical imagination, and **Ozomatli**, the multi-Grammy award-winning, genre-defying sensation, join the orchestra for programs that continue the Pops tradition of focusing on the best and brightest new talent on the musical scene today. Returning to the Pops schedule is the legendary film music series under the direction of **John Williams**, this year marking his 30th anniversary with the Pops, and one of the newest Pops traditions, **Gospel Night** with **Charles Floyd**. To bring the 125th season to a close in June, the Boston Pops will present one of this country's greatest living legends—the incomparable **Arlo Guthrie**. Other highlights include A Boston Pops 125th documentary, entitled *America's Orchestra: Celebrating 125 years of the Boston Pops* to air on PBS in the spring, and a national contest through Twitter, Facebook, and mobile phone text messages for a family of four to win a trip to Boston's famous Fourth-of-July celebration, details of which are available at bostonpops.org/125. **Photos, video, artist bios, a detailed press release and a Boston Pops 125 timeline and history are available at www.bostonpops.org/presskit.**

BACKGROUND ON THE BOSTON POPS

Celebrating its 125th anniversary this spring, May 4-June 19, the Boston Pops Orchestra has distinguished itself as the founder of and leader in its genre, presenting the best of a wide variety of music from jazz to pop, indie rock to big band, film music to the great American songbook, and Broadway to classical. Affectionately known as "America's Orchestra," the Boston Pops is the most recorded and arguably the most beloved orchestra in the country, beginning with the establishment of the modern-era Pops by Arthur Fiedler and continuing through the innovations introduced by John Williams and the new-millennium Pops spearheaded by Keith Lockhart.

With the 125th anniversary season, the Boston Pops reaches a landmark moment in a remarkable history that began with its founding in 1885. Civil War veteran Henry Lee Higginson, the founder of the Boston Symphony (1881) and Boston Pops, intended from the very start to present concerts of light classics and the popular music of the day.

It was **Arthur Fiedler's** nearly 50-year tenure as Pops Conductor (1930-1979) that established the Boston Pops as a national icon by moving the Pops beyond its origins in light-classical music into the world of pop culture showcasing the popular artists of the day as well as the work of young American composers and arrangers. Mr. Fiedler organized the first free outdoor orchestral concerts on the Charles River Esplanade that led to the Boston's now-famous Fourth of July concert, established the Pops as the most recorded orchestra in history--including the first orchestral recording to sell more than a million copies--and introduced the "Evening at Pops" television series, bringing the orchestra into the living rooms of countless Americans.

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When **John Williams** (1980-1993) succeeded Arthur Fiedler in 1980, he was the most highly acclaimed composer in Hollywood, and today, with 45 Academy Award nominations, he is the most-nominated living person in Academy history. With the Pops, Mr. Williams continued the orchestra's prolific recording tradition with a series of best-selling recordings for the Philips and Sony Classical labels, broadened and updated the Pops repertoire--commissioning new compositions and introducing new arrangements of Boston Pops classics--and entertained audiences with live orchestral accompaniment to film clips of memorable movie scenes, many of which featured iconic music from his own film scores. He traveled extensively with the Pops both nationally and internationally, leading the Pops on its first tours to Japan. Mr. Williams also brought a bit of Hollywood to the Pops stage, with special appearances by Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and Frank Langella, not to mention Darth Vader, R2D2, and C3PO.

Having led more than 1,200 Boston Pops concerts, **Keith Lockhart** (1995 - present) is now in his sixteenth season as Boston Pops Conductor. In response to the ever-diversifying trends in music, Keith Lockhart has taken the Pops in new directions, creating programs that reach out to a broader and younger audience by presenting artists--both established performers and rising stars--from virtually every corner of the entertainment world, all the while maintaining the Pops' appeal to its core audience. He has made 67 television shows, led 33 national and four overseas tours with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, and recorded eleven albums. Mr. Lockhart's tenure has been marked by a dramatic increase in touring, the orchestra's first Grammy nominations, the first major network national broadcast (on CBS Television) of the Fourth-of-July spectacular from the Esplanade, and the release of the Boston Pops' first self-produced and self-distributed recordings, now numbering four: *Sleigh Ride, America, Oscar & Tony*, and *The Red Sox Album*. He led the Pops for Chris Botti's "In Boston" CD and DVD, featuring special guests Sting, John Mayer, Josh Groban, Yo-Yo Ma, and Steven Tyler, recorded live from two performances at Symphony Hall. The recording received multiple Grammy nominations earlier this year and the show was aired on PBS stations nationally. Mr. Lockhart has also led the Boston Pops at several high profile sports events, including the pre-game show of Super Bowl XXXVI and the opening game of the 2007 World Series, at Fenway Park with the Boston Red Sox. Further information about the Boston Pops is available at bostonpops.org.

Photos, video, artist bios, a detailed press release and a Boston Pops 125 timeline and history are available at www.bostonpops.org/presskit.

About WGBH

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster, producing such celebrated national PBS series as *Masterpiece*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Frontline*, *Nova*, *American Experience*, *Arthur*, *Curious George* and more than a dozen other award-winning primetime, lifestyle and children's series. Boston's last remaining independent TV station, WGBH produces local TV productions (among them, *Greater Boston*, *Basic Black* and *Maria Hinojosa: One-on-One*) that focus on the region's diverse community, while WGBH 89.7 FM is Boston's NPR Arts & Culture station, offering a rich menu of classical, jazz, blues, news programming and more. WGBH is the leading producer of online content for pbs.org—one of the most-visited dot-org sites on the Internet—a major producer for public radio and a pioneer in developing educational multimedia and new technologies that make media accessible for people with disabilities. For its efforts, WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors, including Oscars, Emmys, Peabodys and duPont-Columbia Journalism Awards. Visit WGBH on the Web at www.wgbh.org.

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