



**SUBURBAN  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA**

DOMENICO BOYAGIAN, MUSIC DIRECTOR

# Suburban Symphony History

## **Brief History of the Suburban Symphony Orchestra**

*Greg Takacs/Bonnie Svetlik*

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Celebrating its 70th season, the Suburban Symphony Orchestra will be performing at Severance Music Center on March 16th at 2pm. The orchestra will be performing Beethoven's majestic Ninth Symphony with the Western Reserve Chorale and the West Shore Chorale.

The orchestra was founded and exists for the enjoyment of its member-players in rehearsing and performing great music. It also exists to provide concerts free of charge to our audience and to provide a forum for Cleveland's wealth of classical music talent, professional, amateur and student.

### **The Early Years and Robert Weiskopf**

In 1955, a group of eight amateur musicians, all high school friends, devoted to promoting music, founded the Suburban Symphony Orchestra (SSO) to continue to develop as musicians and to share their passion for music with the surrounding community. By inviting friends to join them, SSO grew to 35 members by the end of the first season. The first concerts were held in multiple locations and after the tenth season, SSO moved to Beachwood where the orchestra presents its season of five concerts in the beautiful Beachwood High School Auditorium.

In its 70th season, SSO has only had four Music Directors. In 1955 Leo Estal, a classmate of the founding members, conducted for the first season. In 1956 Robert Weiskopf was chosen to lead the orchestra. "Bob" as the orchestra members knew him, was a graduate of Eastman School of Music along with studying with Serge Koussevitzky at Tanglewood. He was married to an internationally famous pianist, Eunice Podis, coupled with his musical education, allowed Weiskopf to bring high musical standards and established strong connections to the professional musical world. In 1965 Bob instituted SSO's Young Soloist Concerts, an opportunity for gifted high school students to perform full concerti with a symphony orchestra. Many of SSO's young soloists have advanced to professional music careers. In addition, he was chairman of WCLV's annual fundraising drive for the Cleveland Orchestra, with one of the donor's prizes, an opportunity to conduct SSO. Bob was SSO's Music Director until his untimely passing in early 1979.

## **The Middle Years and Martin Kessler**

The 1979-1980 season featured 4 conductors who auditioned for music director. In 1980 Martin Kessler was selected to be Music Director. Marty, who is a graduate of Harvard, expanded the orchestra's repertoire and programmed adventurous concerts over the years. The orchestra collaborated with different performers, to perform full operas like Bizet's Carmen to Klezmer Folk Music. In addition, many great orchestral/choral works were performed during his time as music director, from Mendelsohn's Eljia to Beethoven's Missa Solemnis to Dvorak's Stabat Mater. In 1987, Marty initiated SSO's "Operation Springboard" concerts to showcase emerging professionals such as Classical Guitarist Jason Vieaux. Martin Kessler retired from SSO in May 2018 after 38 years as Music Director by celebrating the music of Leonard Bernstein with SSO and longtime musical friends, Soprano Marian Vogel and Choral Arts Cleveland at the historic Maltz Performing Arts Center.

## **Currently and Domenico Boyagian**

In the Fall of 2018 Domenico Boyagian, a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music and several music institutions in Italy, became the fourth Music Director of the Suburban Symphony Orchestra after an extensive search by the orchestra. Domenico and the orchestra have performed many notable concerts since 2018, including the Faure Requiem, The Composer is Dead, a student/artist collaboration with the Rainey Institute, and an uplifting Gospel Concert with the beloved Cleveland Chorale. Since 2018 Domenico and SSO have performed a Beethoven Symphony cycle of which will culminate in the performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in March at Severance. Domenico has initiated SSO's annual summer concerts beginning in 2021, the orchestra's very first concerts after Covid, and has initiated an aggressive campaign to enlarge the orchestra's string section. Today the 88 member SSO stands healthier than ever as one of Cleveland's premier community orchestras.

## **Additional SSO information**

A number of the orchestra's 88 members are music professionals. Some work in non-performance areas of the arts, such as music therapy, public school music, nonprofit management, and private teaching. Other members are well-trained musicians who are medical, architectural, educational, and business professionals. Nonetheless, all members are skilled instrumentalists who are true lovers of their art. The inter-generational membership of SSO spans more than 50 years in age. While the talents of new members are added to the mix each season, the current roster includes one member from the late 1950's, horn player Richard Polster.

The Suburban Symphony is grateful for the continuing support from Beachwood City Schools, The Ohio Arts Council, Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, its members, and donations from our loyal audience.