



Brief History of the Suburban Symphony **A 70-year journey**

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1/12/2025

The Suburban Symphony 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 musicians, all high school friends, devoted to promoting symphonic music, founded the Suburban Symphony Orchestra (SSO) to continue to develop as musicians and to share their passion with the surrounding community. By inviting friends to join them, SSO grew to 35 members by the end of the first season. Leo Esral, a classmate of the founding members, conducted for the first season in 1955. The first concerts were held in multiple locations throughout the Cleveland area, and after the tenth season, SSO found its home in Beachwood, where the orchestra still presents their season of five concerts in the beautiful Beachwood High School Auditorium.

Over the course of 70 years, SSO has only had three Music Directors. 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 and studied with Serge Koussevitzky at Tanglewood. His marriage 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, Bob was chairman of WCLV's annual fundraising drive for the Cleveland Orchestra, where one of the donor's prizes was 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 four conductors who auditioned for the role of music director. In 1980, Martin Kessler was selected to lead the orchestra. 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, in programs ranging from 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 Elijah 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.

Today's Orchestra 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 third Music Director of the Suburban Symphony Orchestra after an extensive search. Domenico and the orchestra have performed many notable concerts since 2018, including the Faure Requiem, The Composer is Dead, student/artist collaborations with the Rainey Institute, and an uplifting Gospel Concert with the beloved Cleveland Chorale. Since 2018, Domenico and SSO have performed the complete Beethoven Symphony cycle which culminates in today's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Severance Music Center. Domenico initiated SSO's annual summer concerts beginning in 2021, after the success of the orchestra's very first concerts after Covid, and has initiated an aggressive campaign to enlarge the orchestra's string section. Today the 80+ member SSO stands healthier than ever as one of Cleveland's premier community orchestras.