



**B O S T O N**

**POPS**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BOSTON POPS**

In 1881, Henry Lee Higginson, the founder of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, wrote of his wish to present in Boston “concerts of a lighter kind of music.” The first Boston Pops concert, on July 11, 1885, represented the fulfillment of his dream. Called the “Promenade Concerts” until 1900, they combined light classical music, tunes from the current hits of the musical theater, and an occasional novelty number. Allowing for some changes of taste over the course of a century, the early programs were remarkably similar to the Pops programs of today.

Pops concerts are performed by the Boston Pops Orchestra, which is composed of members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (except for twelve of the principal players, who tour during the Pops season as the Boston Symphony Chamber Players), and by the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, made up of other Boston-based musicians. Both the Boston Pops Orchestra and the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra appear on television and represent the city of Boston on tour. The Boston Pops Orchestra was featured in the long-running PBS series *Evening at Pops*. The Fourth of July concert featuring the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra at the Hatch Shell in Boston is regularly broadcast nationwide. The Boston Pops Orchestra appeared at the White House as part of its 100th-birthday celebration in 1985; the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra participated in the centennial celebration of the Statue of Liberty in 1986. John Williams led tours of Japan with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra in 1987 and with the Boston Pops Orchestra in 1990 and 1993. Keith Lockhart has led the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra on tour to Japan and Korea, and he has also led the BPEO on 33 national tours.

The history of the Boston Pops was for many years linked with the name of Arthur Fiedler, who in 1930 became the eighteenth conductor of the Boston Pops and the first who was American-born. One of Fiedler’s great dreams was to establish a series of free outdoor orchestral concerts for the people of Boston. In 1929, this dream became a reality when he organized the first Esplanade Concerts, which took place on the banks of the Charles River. Fiedler’s Esplanade concerts were eventually absorbed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra organization.

Following Fiedler’s death on July 10, 1979, Boston Pops Associate Conductor Harry Ellis Dickson and a number of guest conductors led the orchestra until John Williams was appointed Conductor in January 1980. Mr. Williams stepped down as conductor in December 1993 and now holds the title Laureate Conductor. Keith Lockhart became the twentieth conductor of the Boston Pops in February 1995 and is in his fifteenth season this year. In 2010 the Boston Pops will mark its 125th season.