



An American Tour: 86



Boston's *Boston Symphony Orchestra*

The BSO was founded in 1881 by Henry Lee Higginson. Its first conductor was George Henschel, who was a noted baritone as well as conductor, and a close friend of Johannes Brahms. For the orchestra, Henschel devised innovative orchestral seating charts and sent them to Brahms, who replied approvingly.

The orchestra's reputation increased during the music directorship of Serge Koussevitzky. One million radio listeners tuned in when Koussevitzky and the orchestra were the first to perform a live concert for radio broadcast, which they did on NBC in 1926. Under Koussevitzky, the orchestra gave regular radio broadcasts and established its summer home at Tanglewood, where Koussevitzky founded the Berkshire Music Center, which is now the Tanglewood Music Center. Those network radio broadcasts ran from 1926 through 1951, and again from 1954 through 1956. The orchestra continues to make regular live radio broadcasts to the present day. The Boston Symphony was closely involved with the Boston's WGBH Radio as an outlet for its concerts.

In 2004, James Levine became the first American-born music director of the BSO. Levine received critical praise for revitalizing the quality and repertoire since the beginning of his tenure, including championing contemporary composers. During Levine's tenure, by February 2009 the BSO had performed 18 world premieres.

To fund the more challenging and expensive of Levine's musical projects with the orchestra, the orchestra established an "Artistic Initiative Fund" of about \$40 million. This is in addition to the current endowment of the orchestra, which is the largest of any American orchestra at about \$300 million. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_Symphony_Orchestra]

