

A Brief History of the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular

Known today as America's premier Independence Day celebration, the modern-day [Boston Pops](#) July 4 concert was founded in 1974, when David Mugar spoke to Mr. Fiedler about enhancing and invigorating the Pops Esplanade series, and in particular the July 4 concert, over concern about the concerts' waning attendance; he suggested adding a performance of Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" with howitzer cannons and church bells, as well as, a fireworks display over the Charles River.

In its first year, the event, drew an audience of 75,000, which was more than ten times the typical crowd. The following year, the audience dramatically increased to 170,000. In 1976, for the Boston Pops' celebration of the country's Bicentennial, the event was recognized by the "Guinness Book of World Records" as the largest audience for a classical concert. More than 400,000 people were in attendance. In 2001, that record was broken and since that time the event has continued to draw a crowd of approximately half a million visitors from New England and around the world.

In 1978, Arthur Fiedler conducted his 50th and final Fourth of July concert on the Esplanade before his death in 1979. After being named Boston Pops Conductor in 1980, succeeding Mr. Fiedler, John Williams began leading the Fourth of July concerts in 1981, and in 1984, the concert was televised nationwide for the first time in its entirety by WGBH-TV for PBS. Live annual nationwide television broadcasts of the concert began in 1991, airing on A&E from 1991 to 2002 and on CBS from 2003 to 2012, and again in 2016. Locally, the concert has also been broadcast by WCVB-TV (1991-2002) and WBZ-TV (2003-2016).

[Keith Lockhart](#), became the 20th conductor of the Boston Pops in 1995. Mr. Lockhart is the second longest-tenured conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra since the orchestra's founding in 1885. In 2014, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism sponsored the first-ever live webcast of the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular, making the full concert performance available to national and international audiences numbering 1.4 million.

Special guests over the years for the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular have included Aerosmith, Anita Baker, The Beach Boys, the Blue Man Group, Johnny Cash, Howie Day, Neil Diamond, Dropkick Murphys, Linda Eder, Roberta Flack, Arlo Guthrie, Ellis Hall, Jennifer Holliday, Jennifer Hudson, Nick Jonas, Toby Keith, Cyndi Lauper, Little Big Town, Demi Lovato, Barry Manilow, Martina McBride, Maureen McGovern, Don McLean, John Mellencamp, The Pointer Sisters, Rascal Flatts, LeAnn Rimes, David Lee Roth, Arturo Sandoval, Susan Tedeschi, Mel Tormé, Trisha Yearwood, and Buckwheat Zydeco, among others.