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## **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Announces a Genre-Bending Pops Season, Featuring Music Across the Eras of Swing, Broadway, Disco, Movies, Holiday Favorites, Looney Tunes, and American Folk Music**

### **6 PNC Pops Concerts, 4 Movies, Highmark Holiday Pops, and Ben Folds with the PSO Announced**

PITTSBURGH, PA—The **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO)** proudly announces its **2025–2026 Pops Season**, including PNC Pops and movies — a dazzling lineup of performances that blend timeless favorites, thrilling new collaborations, and genre-spanning artistry. From the golden age of swing to disco fever, from Broadway classics to beloved cartoons, this season promises to be one of the most engaging and dynamic in PSO history.

Led by **Principal Pops Conductor [Byron Stripling](#)**, along with an extraordinary roster of guest conductors and artists, the 2025–2026 Pops Season is designed to delight, inspire, and welcome audiences of all ages and be accessible to everyone. Pittsburgh region collaborators include the [Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh](#), the [Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School](#), [The Tamburitians](#), [Pittsburgh CLO](#), and [Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama](#).

“Music has the power to connect, to inspire, and to bring joy,” said **[Byron Stripling](#), PSO Principal Pops Conductor**. “This season is all about welcoming audiences into unforgettable

musical experiences, whether you grew up with Bugs Bunny cartoons, love the swing era, or want to relive the energy of the disco age. It's also about celebrating America in all its variety — its music, its movies, its history and its culture. There's truly something for everyone."

"Programs like *South Pacific* or *Harry Potter* aren't just about putting on a great show," said [Melia P. Tourangeau](#), **PSO President & CEO**. "They are singular experiences at Heinz Hall between family and friends meant to create enduring memories. We're proud to be partnering with so many local artists and organizations this season, just as we are proud to bring new artists to Pittsburgh and our stage. Artists tell the stories of their culture, and this season tells a fantastic story. I welcome everyone to hear it."

### **The PNC Pops Season**

The PNC Pops season swings into action with **Come Swing With Me** (October 3–5, 2025), where Byron Stripling and powerhouse vocalist Paul Loren transport audiences to the golden era of big band jazz. From Sinatra and the Rat Pack, to Louis Prima and Bobby Darin, the young, soulful crooner Paul Loren takes you on a musical journey through The Great American Songbook and highlights some of the most iconic voices of all time along the way.

Next, in a performance sure to bring generations together, ***Bugs Bunny at the Symphony*** (October 31–November 2, 2025), conducted by George Daugherty, will celebrate **Bugs Bunny's 85th Anniversary** with 16 classic Looney Tunes projected on the big screen, while their iconic original scores, inspired by the great composers, are played live by the PSO. This new edition also celebrates the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this beloved concert, especially fitting since its very first major orchestra performance anywhere occurred with the PSO in 1990, at Heinz Hall. Since then, ***Bugs Bunny at the Symphony*** has toured the world in sold-out appearances with over 300 major orchestras, to millions of fans.

In January, audiences will be transported to the South Pacific as PSO collaborates with Pittsburgh CLO and Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama for a concert version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein masterpiece, ***South Pacific*** (January 30–February 1, 2026), conducted by Andy Einhorn. *South Pacific* follows PSO's acclaimed collaboration with the CLO and CMU School of Drama in February 2024 for *Fiddler on the Roof*.

February's "**America the Beautiful**" (February 27–March 1, 2026), conducted by **Byron Stripling**, will be a powerful, uplifting celebration of America's 250th birthday with a musical journey that captures the heart and soul of the nation through its rich tapestry of sound, showcasing the evolution of American music from spirituals and gospel tunes that lift spirits to the rhythms of ragtime and the heartfelt passion of the blues.

As spring arrives, audiences can escape to a tropical paradise with **Tropical Rock: For 5 O'Clock... Somewhere (April 17–19, 2026)**. Sing along to "Under the Boardwalk," "Kokomo," "Don't Worry, Be Happy," "It's Five O'clock Somewhere," "Brown-Eyed Girl," and all your favorites as we raise a glass to the power of the surf and the romance of the islands.

The season closes with a dance-floor anthem of a finale, as Byron Stripling leads a powerhouse trio of vocalists—Shayna Steele, Crystal Monee Hall, and Kelly Levesque—in **Disco Divas (June 5–7, 2026)**, an electrifying celebration of the reigning Queens of Disco: Donna Summer, Gloria Gayner, Patti LaBelle, Chaka Khan and the one and only Diana Ross, along with classic Disco hits from Earth, Wind & Fire, The Bee Gees, Michael Jackson and more.

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## **Highmark Holiday Pops**

December brings Pittsburgh's cherished holiday tradition: **Highmark Holiday Pops** (December 12–21, 2025), featuring conductor [Daniel Meyer](#), Broadway star [Blaine Alden Krauss](#), the [Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh](#), the [Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School](#), and [The Tamburitians](#) in a festive celebration of the season. Featuring "Sleigh Ride" and the "Hallelujah" chorus, as well as sing-alongs and a very special guest – all in the festive Yuletide splendor of Heinz Hall.

A [sensory-friendly performance](#) will ensure music is accessible to all members of the community. The sensory-friendly Holiday Pops features the mitigation of sudden, loud sounds, fidgets and headphones, a quiet room, and open hall doors allowing families to leave and re-enter as needed.

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## **Movies with the PSO**

Experience your favorite films on the big screen with iconic scores performed live by your Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra: the 2025-2026 Pops season sees the continuation of the *Harry Potter* film series with ***Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince***™. Holiday movies include ***Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*** October 25-26, and ***Elf in Concert*** November 21 and 23.

Additional movies in the 2025-2026 season are yet to be announced.

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## **Ben Folds with the PSO**

Widely regarded as one of the major music influencers of our generation, Emmy-nominated singer-songwriter-composer Ben Folds joins the PSO for a one-night special on October 7.

The Emmy-nominated singer-songwriter-composer has created an enormous body of genre-bending music that includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums, and numerous collaborative records. His latest pop solo album was released in 2023 to rave reviews and sold-out performances. He released his first Christmas album in 2024 and last Fall recorded a LIVE album slated for release in 2025 with the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) at the Kennedy Center in DC where he served for eight years as the first Artistic Advisor to the NSO.

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## **Tickets and Information**

Subscription packages, starting at \$196, for the 2025–2026 PNC Pops Season are available now. Single tickets, starting at \$25, will go on sale July 22. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [www.pittsburghsymphony.org](http://www.pittsburghsymphony.org) or contact the Heinz Hall box office at 412-392-4900 or [customerservice@pittsburghsymphony.org](mailto:customerservice@pittsburghsymphony.org).

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## **With Gratitude**

- PNC Pops concerts are made possible by title sponsorship support from PNC. The 2025-2026 season marks PNC's 25th consecutive year as title sponsor of the series.
- Highmark Holiday Pops concerts are made possible by title sponsorship support from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. The 2025-2026 season will mark the 18th year for Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield as title sponsor of Holiday Pops.
- Sensory Friendly concerts are made possible by generous grants from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and support from Allegheny Health Network.
- Support for PSO operations and for capital improvements for Heinz Hall is made possible by the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD).
- The PSO is grateful for overall support from local and state government entities: The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Fairmont Pittsburgh is the official hotel of the Pittsburgh Symphony.
- Delta Airlines is the official airline of the Pittsburgh Symphony.
- Radio station WQED-FM 89.3/WQEZ-FM 89.7 is the official voice of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.
- Renaissance is the official caterer of the Pittsburgh Symphony.
- The PSO is grateful to the PA Department of Education; Arts, Equity, & Education Fund; Hans and Leslie Fleischner; EQT Foundation; and the National Endowment for the Arts for major support of the Paul J. Ross Fellowship.

### **About Popular Programming at the PSO**

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra history with popular programming goes back to its early days with Victor Herbert. In the following decades, Pops performances were often billed as “light programs and popular soloists,” with guest conductors and stars of the era such as Benny Goodman, Henry Mancini, Ethel Merman, Phyllis Diller, and Doc Severinsen. With the advent of the Marvin Hamlisch era, the venerable Pops series was infused with a new injection of excitement and “razzle-dazzle” as he welcomed memorable programs like “Love Nights” and

“Prom Nights,” and stars like Bernadette Peters. With the unexpected passing of Hamlisch in 2012, the symphony’s Pops programming continued under the baton of leading guest conductors, welcoming star guest artists like Chris Botti.

In 2020, the PSO appointed Byron Stripling as Principal Pops Conductor. Under Stripling’s leadership, popular programming brings fresh vitality to orchestral music through contemporary artist collaborations, new arrangements of classic tunes, and films with live orchestra, introducing legions of new fans to the PSO and Heinz Hall each season.

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## **Chronological Concert Listing**

### **Come Swing with Me (PNC Pops)**

Friday, October 3, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 4, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 5, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Byron Stripling, *conductor*

Paul Loren, *vocalist*

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### **Ben Folds with the PSO**

Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Ben Folds, *vocals and piano*

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### ***Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas (Movie)***

Saturday, October 25, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 26, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

*Conductor to be announced*

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### **Warner Bros. Discovery presents**

### **Bugs Bunny at the Symphony (PNC Pops)**

Friday, October 31, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 1, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 2, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

George Daugherty, *conductor*

Created by George Daugherty & David Ka Lik Wong

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### ***Elf in Concert (Movie)***

Friday, November 21, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 23, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

*Conductor to be announced*

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**Highmark Holiday Pops**

Friday, December 12, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. \*

Saturday, December 13, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 14, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Friday, December 19, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 20, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 20, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Daniel Meyer, *conductor*

Blaine Alden Krauss, *vocalist*

Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School

The Tamburitzans

\* *Sensory-friendly performance*

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**Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince™ (Movie)**

Saturday, January 10, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 11, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

Rated PG

*Conductor to be announced*

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**Rodgers & Hammerstein's South Pacific in Concert (PNC Pops)**

In collaboration with Pittsburgh CLO and CMU School of Drama

Friday, January 30, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

Andy Einhorn, *conductor*

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**America the Beautiful (PNC Pops)**

Friday, February 27, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 28, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

Byron Stripling, *conductor*

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**Tropical Rock: For 5 O'clock... Somewhere (PNC Pops)**

Friday, April 17, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 19, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

Jack Everly, *conductor*

Travis Birch, *vocalist/guitar*

Chris Blem, *vocalist*

John Boswell, *piano*

Scott Coulter, *vocalist*

Lisa Howard, *vocalist*

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**Disco Divas (PNC Pops)**

Friday, June 5, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 6, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 7, 2026, at 2:30 p.m.

Byron Stripling, *conductor*

Shayna Steele, *vocalist*

Crystal Monee Hall, *vocalist*

Kelly LeVesque, *vocalist*

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***All programs, artists, and prices are subject to change.***

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