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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: J.R. Cassidy
(859) 431-6216
jr@kyso.org

Kentucky

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
James R. Cassidy, *Music Director*



20 Seasons of innovative programming and opportunity

This season marks significant chunk of the Kentucky Symphony Orchestra's and the community's history together. In terms of numbers the KSO has performed for nearly 500,000 people with (400,000 of those at no charge — 110,000 students / 289,000 park concerts & runouts.) The KSO has contracted more than 1000 individual musicians over that time period, providing opprotunities to perform a variety of quality and diverse repertoire.

We started by mistakingly mailing our very first brochure to area dogs and cats via an Iams Pet Food list, but never lost sight of the original mission of making symphonic music and its derivatives — attractive, accessible and affordable. We dispensed with audience dress codes, pretense, staid perceptions, and the percieved barrier separating musician and artist from the audience. The KSO is proud of the personal connection it makes with its attendees.



A 1998 concert on the evening
of George Gershwin's 100th Birthday

As the founder of the group I am often asked to recount highlights over these many years. Below are a few reflections of the various programs we have performed over the course of the orchestra's artistic life. Many experiences for both musicians and audience were unique. With 19 years in the can there are many performances, collaborations, spin-off efforts and unique creations and experiments that come to mind:

Over the years the KSO has collaborated on-stage with just about every type of entity imaginable: Hasbro Toys, NBC's Saturday Night Live, KY National Guard, Cincinnati Zoo, groups from UC, NKU, IU, UK, KY State, most of the Cincinnati Arts organizations and Kings Island.

In the second season (1993), I remember meeting with Gary Burbank at a Perkins Restaurant to rewrite the characterizations that went along with Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf. This was 1993, so imagine Marge Schott as the duck, Bevis as Peter, Ross Perot as Grandpa and Earl Pitts as the Wolf.... The audience laughed out loud during the performance of a classic — “What were we doing?” some exclaimed. (The story remained in tact, but names were changed to inject flavor)

Creating subsidiary ensembles that specialize in a particular genres of music has been quite successful through the years. The KSO's Flood Wall Jazz Quintet, the Newport Ragtime Band, and the KSO Boogie Band offer some of the most nostalgic and engaging music, as well as the area's best musicians.

Semi-staged productions of *West Side Story*, *Evita*, and *Sweeney Todd* as well as concert opera productions of *La Boheme*, *Otello*, *Tosca* and *Rigoletto* paired artists from New York with incredible local talent for some very memorable performances.



Recapturing America's nostalgic past has led the KSO to investigate and recreate musical parodies of Spike Jones and build a library of Sinatra classics and a number of tunes from the Great American Songbook.

Experimental efforts included pairing simultaneous premiere performances of the original Melchior Lengyel pantomime and a newly restored score to Bela Bartok's original *Miraculous Mandarin*. The KSO was performing on-stage, but the pantomime set and actors' performance took place in another building, the live video of which was relayed back to the auditorium on-screen via three video cameras.

The KSO's forays into film and video accompaniments have been quite popular too: Several silent films including the epic *Ben-Hur* and the MGM classic *The Wizard of Oz* have shown the orchestra in it's most flexible form. A live cartoon extravaganza even paired the original composers (Steve and Julie Bernstein) and voice talent (Rob Paulsen) with the video and music of several popular and nostalgic animated favorites.

Classically speaking — 5 Mahler symphonies, 3 Stravinsky ballets, 3 world premieres, 3 US premieres, 28 regional / Tri-state premieres — we've been through a lot of standard repertoire, but a number of pieces and composers that are off the beaten path. We've played a lot of American music over the years.

Early on the KSO teamed-up with fitness instructors for "Sweatin' to the Symphony" — a classical aerobics class. We took that a step further in Devou Park by adding the Beethoven 5k-run on the first half of the program. It was fun to watch a couple musicians play the famous opening notes of the Symphony, then set their instruments down and charge off to join the runners (they both made it back for the final movement).

Season number 20 captures those moments the KSO does best, combining opera, film, big band jazz, and classics with a spin. Enclosed/attached is our 20th season brochure. I hope you will join us as we add to the memories this season.

— James Cassidy
KSO Founder, Music Director & CEO