

October 19, 2025

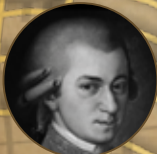
The
Wallingford Symphony Orchestra
presents

WSO Cherished Orchestral Masterworks

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Mozart



Smetana



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The *Wallingford Symphony Orchestra* is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing professional, high quality, orchestral music to the greater Wallingford area.

Through public performances and community outreach, the WSO enables musicians to enhance their musical abilities and awareness, fostering an appreciation for music in the community's youth. The WSO is an integral and active member in the cultural life of the surrounding communities.

A volunteer board of directors oversees the operation of the orchestra; meeting monthly to monitor the budget, plan and approve the concert season, and organize fund raising.

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Dear WSO Patrons and Donors,

This season is more than just a lineup of concerts — it's a vibrant celebration of our community's passion for great music. From beloved classics to bold new works and special themed programs, our upcoming performances will showcase world-class soloists, stunning orchestral masterpieces, and inspiring new discoveries. Each concert highlights our talented musicians and the deep connection we've built with you, our cherished audience.

We're especially excited to bring you highlights such as Cherished Orchestral Masterworks, Holiday Harmonies, Voices of Hungary, and our outdoor 250th Anniversary Patriotic Pops Concert, plus a free Children's Concert for Wallingford families. Together, these performances embody the spirit of creativity, diversity, and joy that define our orchestra.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors, donors, and volunteers. Your steadfast support allows us to thrive and continue sharing the magic of music. Music soothes the mind, warms the heart, and enriches the soul — and we can't wait to perform the finest symphonic and pops music for you again this season.

Mark your calendars and join us for an unforgettable journey of music, community, and celebration — a season you truly won't want to miss!

Cherished Orchestral Masterworks

Join the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra for an unforgettable afternoon of music as we present "Cherished Orchestral Masterworks," a program celebrating some of the greatest treasures of the symphonic repertoire.

The concert opens with Antonín Dvořák's Scherzo Capriccioso, Op. 66, a lively and imaginative work brimming with Bohemian charm and energetic rhythms. This spirited piece showcases Dvořák's gift for melodic invention and sets a joyful tone for the afternoon. Next, the orchestra welcomes violinist Nina Crothers and violist Suzanne Corey-Sahlin for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E-flat Major, K. 364. This Classical masterpiece is a radiant dialogue between soloists and orchestra. From its majestic opening Allegro maestoso, through the tender and lyrical Andante, to the sparkling Presto finale, the Sinfonia Concertante highlights Mozart's brilliance and the virtuosity of our guest artists.

Holiday Harmonies

Celebrate the magic of the season with the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra's festive Holiday Concert — an enchanting evening of beloved holiday classics and timeless favorites.

This heartwarming program fills the hall with cherished carols, joyful anthems, and treasured seasonal music — from “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” and “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” to “Silver Bells.” Relive the magic of the season with Christmas at the Movies, featuring unforgettable music from holiday film favorites including Home Alone, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Miracle on 34th Street, The Polar Express, and The Nightmare Before Christmas. The evening also embraces the season's many traditions with the uplifting Festive Sounds of Hanukkah, adding even more warmth and joy to this unforgettable event. Gather your family and friends for this beautiful holiday tradition filled with music, community, and cheer — the perfect way to welcome the season.

Voices of Hungary

Step into the heart of Hungarian musical heritage with “Voices of Hungary,” an immersive concert experience showcasing legendary composers, brilliant soloists, and a tapestry of timeless works. The afternoon begins with Hungarian Passions, featuring Kodály's sweeping Dances of Galánta, Weiner's lyrical Ballad for Clarinet and Orchestra performed by Sallai Noémi, and Lehár's glittering Gold and Silver Waltz, followed by Brahms' beloved Hungarian Dances Nos. 5 and 6, all infused with the exuberance and irresistible pulse of Hungarian folk dance.

The second half shines a spotlight on our featured artists, including internationally acclaimed acoustic violinist Nyári Bernadett and pianist Tóth Péter. Bernadett performs a thrilling medley of Hungarian and Central European favorites — from Lehár's dramatic *Te rongyos élet* to Kálmán's fiery *Komm Zigan* — while Tóth Péter dazzles with Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, a Romantic masterpiece that combines poetry and power.

Children's Concert

Our special Children's Concert is exclusively for Wallingford students in grades 5-6! Get ready to be captivated as the winner of the Mitchell Family Fund String Concerto Competition for Young String Players in New Haven County takes the stage alongside the WSO.

July Patriotic Pops Concert

Celebrate the 250th anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence with a joyful outdoor Patriotic Pops Concert. This festive evening features iconic marches, beloved folk songs, Broadway and jazz favorites, and nostalgic movie themes in a vibrant salute to our shared history and culture. Highlights include Sousa's stirring anthems, Gershwin classics, folk treasures, and a heartfelt Armed Forces Salute, building to a thrilling finale with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture and beloved patriotic standards. Bring your family, friends, and picnic blankets for an unforgettable night of music under the summer sky.

We look forward to bringing you unforgettable entertainment this season and beyond! Each concert promises to be a remarkable journey through the world of music, leaving lasting memories for all who attend.



Philip Ventre, WSO Founder and Music Director



WSO 2025-2026 Concerts

This season brings four unforgettable concerts — from the timeless beauty of Cherished Orchestral Masterworks to the festive sparkle of Holiday Harmonies, the vibrant spirit of Voices of Hungary, and the grand outdoor 250th Anniversary Patriotic Pops Concert. Each program showcases world-class soloists, beloved masterpieces, and thrilling new discoveries that celebrate music's power to inspire and connect. Plus, Wallingford children can enjoy a special free children's concert, making this season a true celebration for the whole community.

October 19, 2025

Sunday, 2:00pm at the Ann and George Colony Hall

Cherished Orchestral Masterworks - featuring timeless works by Dvořák, Mozart, Smetana, Copland, and Ravel. From the spirited Scherzo Capriccioso to the mesmerizing Boléro, enjoy an unforgettable afternoon of symphonic treasures.

November 30, 2025

Sunday, 2:00pm at the Ann and George Colony Hall

Holiday Harmonies - Embrace the magic of the season with the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra's festive Holiday Harmonies concert. Enjoy beloved carols, holiday classics, and music from favorite Christmas films — a joyful tradition for all ages.

March 15, 2026

Sunday 2:00pm at the Ann and George Colony Hall

Voices of Hungary - Celebrate Hungary's rich musical heritage with works by Kodály, Weiner, Lehár, Brahms, Liszt, Bartók, and more. An unforgettable afternoon with the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra and acclaimed guest soloists: Nyári Bernadett (violin), Tóth Péter (piano), and Sallai Noémi

March 16, 2026

Monday, 10:00am at the Ann and George Colony Hall

Our Free **Children's Concert** for Wallingford school children.

July, 2026

7:00pm on Choate Rosemary Hall Chapel Lawn

July Patriotic Pops - Honor America's 250th anniversary with a stirring Patriotic Pops Concert. Enjoy an evening of marches, folk songs, film themes, and patriotic favorites under the summer sky.

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Adult	\$55.00
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**Founder and
Music Director
of the Wallingford
Symphony Orchestra**

PHILIP T. VENTRE

When Philip Ventre and Terence Netter founded the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra in 1974 in collaboration with the Wallingford Bicentennial Commission, the intention was to enrich the cultural lives of nearby residents through music. It has been the WSO's mission ever since.

Maestro Ventre retired in 2020 as the Head of Instrumental Music at Choate Rosemary Hall. During his 50-year tenure, Maestro Ventre conducted the CRH Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, taught six music history courses and has been nominated three times for a GRAMMY Music Educator Award and has also been selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholar Teacher of Recognition.

As the Music Director of the Choate Rosemary Hall Orchestra (CRHO), Maestro Ventre toured with his CRHO in twelve European countries many times, in China four times, including four times on The Great Wall, in South Korea twice, performing in historic concert halls and cathedrals including such prestigious sites as the Madeleine Cathedral, The Salzburg Cathedral, The Barcelona Cathedral, The Esterhazy Mansion, Shanghai Conservatory, and Zhongshan Park Music Hall.

The CRHO has also performed as invited guests in Carnegie Hall twice, Lincoln Center, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Guggenheim Museum, Yale University's Woolsey Hall, and the Connecticut Music Educators All State Music

Conventions. In December 2009 the CRHO was presented with the honor of performing at the White House in Washington, D.C

Born into a family with a rich international musical heritage, Maestro Ventre's interest in music began at a young age. His mother was an accomplished vocalist, pianist, organist, and choral conductor. His father performed in the 1930's with the Paramount Theater, Roxy Theater and Radio City Music Hall Symphony Orchestra. He was on Tour with the Paul Whitman Orchestra.

As a child, Maestro Ventre studied piano with his mother and trumpet with his uncle, John Ventre, the principal trumpet of the iconic American Paul Lavalle's Cities Service Band of America. Maestro Ventre received a Bachelor of Music Degree in Music Education and a Master of Music Degree in Music History from the New England Conservatory (N.E.C.) in Boston. During his years at N.E.C., he was introduced to classical music while performing as principal trumpet with numerous Boston orchestras including the Boston Pops under the direction of Arthur Fiedler.

The Maestro began his educational career in 1967 as the Chair of the Music Department at Brown and Nichols School in Cambridge, MA, where he was the Director of Instrumental Music and taught music history. It is here that he developed a love for orchestral conducting. Maestro Ventre studied conducting with Maestro Otto-Werner Mueller at Yale School of Music and also with Maestro Charles Bruck at the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors, serving as Maestro Bruck's assistant for three years.

Maestro Ventre was the Music Director of the Greater New Haven Youth Symphony Orchestra (GNHYO) Chamber Orchestra and Symphonic Wind Ensemble from 1993-2005. He conducted the GNHYO in both Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. He conducted the WSO in performances with the Connecticut Opera, Connecticut Ballet, New Haven Ballet, and he guest conducted the University of Connecticut Orchestra.

Guest conducting engagements have included the Vivaldi Concertante Orchestra of London, the Kammerorchester Arpeggione of Zurich, the Longwood Symphony Orchestra (MA), the Fort Collins Symphony (CO), the Nashua Symphony Orchestra (NH) and the Northern Ballet Theater (NH). Since 1998, Maestro Ventre has been a frequent guest conductor in the People's Republic of China conducting the Xiamen Philharmonic, Tianjin Symphony, Guangxi Province Orchestra, Xi'an Symphony and the Shaanxi Philharmonic Orchestra.



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Join Us for Our Annual Free Pops Concert!



Summer Pops 2026

July, 2026 at 7:00pm

on Seymour St. John Chapel lawn-Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, CT

Each 4th of July the WSO presents a grand concert free of charge to celebrate our great country. Familiar selections and sing alongs bring us all to our patriotic roots.

Celebrate the 250th anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence with a joyful outdoor Patriotic Pops Concert. This festive evening features iconic marches, beloved folk songs, Broadway and jazz favorites, and nostalgic movie themes in a vibrant salute to our shared history and culture. Highlights include Sousa's stirring anthems, Gershwin classics, folk treasures, and a heartfelt Armed Forces Salute, building to a thrilling finale with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture and beloved patriotic standards. Bring your family, friends, and picnic blankets for an unforgettable night of music under the summer sky.

A special evening with friends gathering on the lawn of Choate's St. John Chapel this Sunday.

A truly unforgettable WSO Concert!



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TIMEA MEHESZ



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March 16, 2026



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Leo Tolstoy

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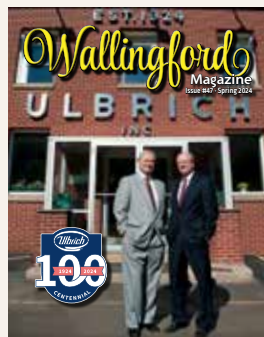
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The Wallingford Symphony Orchestra History

The Wallingford Symphony Orchestra (WSO) was the brainchild of Philip T. Ventre and the late Terence Netter. In 1974 Maestro Ventre, Music Director and teacher at Choate Rosemary Hall, and Mr. Netter, Director of the Paul Mellon Arts Center at Choate Rosemary Hall, wanted to honor our nation's bicentennial by creating a symphony orchestra comprised of Connecticut's finest professional musicians, private music teachers, college students and rising amateur musicians.

They brought their idea to the Wallingford Bicentennial Commission and its Horizons Committee endorsed and funded the WSO's first concert in December of that year. Professional musicians from both the New Haven and the Hartford Symphony Orchestras, Connecticut-based private music teachers, and gifted college and high school musicians were brought together under the Direction of Maestro Ventre.

Nikolai Sikorsky, the son of helicopter inventor Igor Sikorsky, served as the WSO's first lead violinist (Concertmaster). Also of important note is that the Associate Concertmaster, Jeanne Switzer, was a Wallingford music teacher who studied with Dr. Suzuki in Japan and brought his Suzuki method of violin instruction to the United States. She played with the WSO for many years to follow.

After the first year, Choate Rosemary Hall took over the funding of the WSO until it was incorporated in 1978 as a professional symphony orchestra. John Shulga, a local prominent businessman and community leader, was the first President of the Board of Directors.

The WSO continues its purpose of enriching the cultural lives of nearby residents each year with four indoor classical concerts.



The season kicks off in October and includes a holiday concert that is enhanced by local singers and choirs. The spring concert reaches out to Wallingford students through the Uria and Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Children's Concert Series, a program started in 1980 and given its name in 1998. During the summer the WSO performs a free outdoor pops concert on the St. John Chapel lawn to celebrate the Fourth of July. At this concert, the audience will hear anything from Boston Pops classics to Broadway and Hollywood themed music. The WSO has performed in ten Connecticut communities, including since 1993 the Madison Cultural Arts July 4th Pops Concert on the Madison Green.

The WSO also supports surrounding communities through outreach programs. One such program is the Elizabeth Mitchell String Concerto Competition. This program offers high school students in New Haven County the opportunity to compete for a scholarship and the chance to perform with the Orchestra at the Spring concert.

Over the past 51 years many esteemed musicians have performed with the orchestra as well as opera singers, jazz and pop vocalists and ballet dancers. Among them are jazz legend Dave Brubeck, American Ballet Theater's prima ballerina Julie Kent, violinists Stephanie Chase and Livia Sohn, violoncellist Raphael Bell, pianists Ayako Tsuruta, Kariné Poghosyan, Péter Toth and opera singers Maria Spacagna, Jerry Hadley, Maxim Ivanov and Susan Yankee. The WSO has welcomed many outstanding Connecticut performance groups to its stage, including the Hartford Chorale, the New Haven Chorale, the Fairfield Chorale and Connecticut's finest middle school and high school public and private school choruses.

Performers have come and gone since that first concert almost 51 years ago at the Paul Mellon Art Center on the Choate Rosemary Hall campus. There are two, however, who still remain. Founder and Director Philip T. Ventre and Janice Setzer, a first section violinist, continue to grace the stage. They and their fellow musicians will bring the WSO into the future with the start of the WSO's 51st season.



Marilyn Catasus

WGO Cherished Orchestral Masterworks

Philip Thomas Ventre, Founder & Music Director

October 19, 2025 @ 2:00pm

Ann and George Colony Hall, Choate Rosemary Hall

Cherished Orchestral Masterworks

Celebrating some of the greatest treasures of the symphonic repertoire.

Scherzo Capriccioso, Op. 66

Antonín Dvořák

Sinfonia Concertante

for Violin, Viola, and Orchestra

in E-flat Major, K. 364

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Andante

III. Presto

Nina Crothers, violin

Suzanne Corey-Sahlin, viola

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Intermission

Má vlast (My Homeland)

Bedřich Smetana

Vltava (The Moldau)

The Source of the River

The River's Flow – Main Theme

The Hunt

Peasant Wedding

Moonlight Dance of the Nymphs

St. John's Rapids

The Majestic River – Vyšehrad Castle Theme

The River Widens and Flows into the Distance

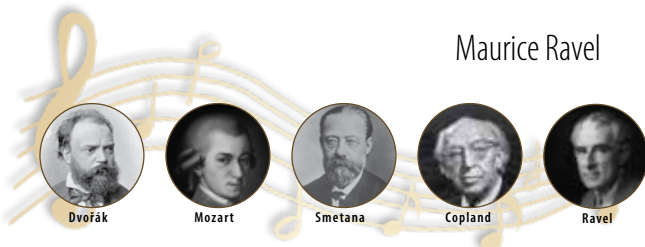
Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland

Variations on a Shaker Melody

Boléro

Maurice Ravel



The concert opens with Antonín Dvořák's *Scherzo Capriccioso*, Op. 66, a lively and imaginative work brimming with Bohemian charm and energetic rhythms. This spirited piece showcases Dvořák's gift for melodic invention and sets a joyful tone for the afternoon.

Next, the orchestra welcomes violinist Nina Crothers and violist Suzanne Corey-Sahlin for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin and Viola in E-flat Major, K. 364. This Classical masterpiece is a radiant dialogue between soloists and orchestra. From its majestic opening *Allegro maestoso*, through the tender and lyrical *Andante*, to the sparkling *Presto finale*, the *Sinfonia Concertante* highlights Mozart's brilliance and the virtuosity of our guest artists.

Vltava (The Moldau)

The Source:

The piece begins with flutes and clarinets, followed by the harp, depicting the two small springs (one warm and one cold) from which the Vltava originates.

The River's Flow:

The main river theme, a flowing G-major melody, emerges, portraying the river winding through woods and meadows. The French horns introduce a hunting call.

Peasant Wedding:

The sounds of a cheerful polka — a rustic wedding celebration — are heard.

Moonlight Dance of the Nymphs:

A serene, mysterious section features high-pitched, flute-like woodwinds and muted violins, painting a scene of water nymphs dancing in the moonlight.

The River's Rapids:

The music becomes more agitated and turbulent, portraying the dangerous St. John's Rapids.

Vyšehrad:

The river then flows majestically into Prague, passing the historic Vyšehrad Castle.

The River's End:

The Vltava widens and flows majestically into the distance, eventually joining the Elbe River.

Appalachian Spring is a ballet created in 1944 by America's cherished choreographer Martha Graham and composer Aaron Copland. The ballet takes place in a 19th-century Pennsylvania Appalachian settlement. There are four main characters: the Bride, the Husbandman, the Pioneer Woman, and the Revivalist, who is accompanied by four Followers. Appalachian Spring follows the Bride and the Husbandman as they get married and celebrate with the community. Themes of war are present throughout the story; it is suggested that the Husbandman leaves for war, causing worry and anxiety among the community. Shaker themes and tunes inspired the ballet, most notably Copland's choice of the classic Shaker tune, Simple Gifts, which we shall hear today in Copland's heartfelt and dance-like theme and variations.

Boléro was commissioned by France's celebrated ballet dancer Ida Rubinstein, to be included in a new ballet featuring six movements from Isaac Albéniz's Iberia. While on vacation in St. Jean-de-Luz, Ravel played on a piano a one-finger melody, saying, "Don't you think this theme has an insistent quality? I'm going to try and repeat it a number of times without any development, gradually increasing the orchestra as best I can." And as they say, "The best is yet to come!" Boléro was a sensational success at its premiere at the Paris Opera on 22 November 1928. It became Ida Rubinstein's "signature" ballet moment, which she danced worldwide. To Ravel's surprise, Boléro went on to become his most famous composition—though he had predicted that most orchestras would refuse to play it.

According to a possibly apocryphal story from the 1928 premiere, a woman was heard shouting that Ravel was mad. When told about this, Ravel is said to have remarked that she had understood the composition. Today, Boléro is rarely staged as a ballet, but it is performed and recorded by orchestras worldwide and is also heard in film soundtracks. Legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini gave a very successful American premiere of Boléro with the New York Philharmonic on 14 November 1929. Ravel attended that performance and told Toscanini, "That's not my tempo." Toscanini replied, "When I play it at your tempo, it is not effective." To which Ravel retorted, "Then do not play it."



T.D.Ellis

Principal Bassoon

www.themusicsource.org

T.D. Ellis has been principal bassoon of the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra since 2009. He became the personnel manager in 2010. Mr. Ellis is also the principal bassoon and personnel manager of the Ridgefield Symphony (where he performed as a soloist) and the Bermuda Philharmonic, as well as the personnel manager and acting principal bassoon of the Greater Bridgeport Symphony. Growing up in West Hartford, he attended the Hartt School of Music and State University of New York at Purchase.

Connecticut performances include soloist for the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra and principal bassoon for the Ives Festival Orchestra. In addition to his home state, Mr. Ellis can be heard throughout the Northeastern states where he has been a soloist for the Chappaqua Orchestra and principal bassoon for the Tamworth Music Festival in New Hampshire and the Garrett Lakes Arts Festival in Deep Creek, MD. He has also played off-Broadway with the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players and the Jewish Repertory Theater. He is the artistic director of the Keeler Tavern Museum Chamber Music Series in Ridgefield and was the founder and artistic director of the Ridgefield Symphony's summer concert series at Lasdon Park in Katonah, NY.

Mr. Ellis is the owner/operator of The Music Source, an online music store. He is also the owner of T.D. Ellis Music Publishing Company which publishes his own work, as well as that of Anthony Newman and other composers. Additionally, Mr. Ellis is a music copyist and has typeset scores for Tony Bennett, Elton John, Celine Dion, Luciani Pavorotti, the Boston Pops; as well as music for the Grammy Awards, Kennedy Center Honors, and President Obama's Inauguration. He currently resides in Waterbury, CT.



Nina Crothers

Concertmaster

Violinist Nina Crothers joined the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra in 1988 as concertmaster, soloing in Beethoven's Triple Concerto in the spring concert, and has performed Vivaldi's Spring and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the WSO thereafter.

A native of Northford, CT, Dr. Crothers began her violin studies at the Neighborhood Music School in New Haven where she was taught the Suzuki method under Jeanne Switzer, former concertmaster of the WSO. She attended Choate Rosemary Hall where she was a member of the Choate Chamber Orchestra and a student string quartet under the direction of Philip Ventre, also playing with the WSO in her senior year. Dr. Crothers graduated magna cum laude from Yale University, receiving the Bach Society Prize for excellence in music. She earned her Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School and her Doctor of Musical Arts from the Manhattan School of Music, where she was awarded a cultural grant from the American Scandinavian Society for her research on Finnish violin music. Her principal teachers were Sylvia Rosenberg, Joseph Fuchs, Syoko Aki, and Louise Behrend. She also studied chamber music with Felix Galimir and members of the Tokyo and Juilliard String Quartets as well as Baroque performance practice with harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper.

Dr. Crothers served as violin coach to the actress Isabella Rossellini in 1994 for the film *Immortal Beloved* and is a former faculty member of Fairfield University, the Luzerne Music Center, the Greenwich House Music School, and the Turtle Bay Music School in New York City. At the Turtle Bay Music School, where she taught violin, chamber music, theory, and music history, she served as chair of the String and Theory/Literature Departments and director of the school's Certificate Program. In 2005, Dr. Crothers joined the faculty of the Suzuki Music School of Westport. She is currently assistant concertmaster of both the Greater Bridgeport Symphony and the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra as well as principal second violin of the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. She maintains a private studio in Fairfield where she resides with her husband and twin daughters.



Elizabeth Kitson

Flutist

Elizabeth Kitson is the principal flutist of the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra and the Catskill Symphony Orchestra. She has made solo appearances with both orchestras performing works such as Fantasia on Greensleeves by Ralph Vaughn Williams, Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G Major, BWV 1049, and Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B Minor, BWV 1067 by J.S. Bach.

Ms. Kitson performs regularly with the Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra, New Britain Symphony Orchestra, Clinton Symphony Orchestra of the Mohawk Valley (New York), Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, and Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra. She performed as principal flutist in the Utica Symphony Orchestra for two seasons and the American Wind Symphony Orchestra, AWSO, for three seasons. Ms. Kitson can be heard as a featured soloist on Villa-Lobos's Concerto Grosso for Woodwind Quartet and Wind Orchestra on the recording Music of the Americas by the AWSO. She can also be heard on AWSO recordings Reflections, and Concertos from Three Continents.

She is on the music faculty of Choate Rosemary Hall and was a faculty member of the Manhattan School Summer Music Camp from 2005-2008. She received her M.M from the Manhattan School of Music and her B.M from the University of North Texas graduating summa cum laude. Her former teachers include Michael Parloff, Mary Karen Clardy, and Alberto Almarza. Ms. Kitson was a winner of the Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition and named an Outstanding Soloist at the Texas Flute Society's 23rd Annual Flute Festival.



Creg Hlavac

Trumpet 2

Craig Hlavac is the Associate Dean of the Liberal Arts (Arts, Humanities, Social & Behavioral Sciences) at Southern Connecticut State University. Previously, he served as Associate Professor and Chair of the Music Department at Southern. For the past 15 years, Dr. Hlavac has also been the director of the University Band at SCSU.

He received a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Bachelor of Science in Music Education from the University of Connecticut, a Master of Music from Yale University, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Hartford. An active orchestral trumpeter and freelance musician, Dr. Hlavac has performed with the New Haven Symphony, the Bridgeport Symphony, the Wallingford Symphony, the Hartford Pops Band, the Hartford Brass Ensemble, the New Haven Brass Ensemble, and alongside the Yale Glee Club, the Yale Camerata, the Connecticut Chamber Choir, the Cape Cod Chamber Music Society, and many others.

A frequent educational leadership clinician and presenter, Dr. Hlavac has delivered presentations throughout the country. He is also an advisory board member for The Department Chair, the premier academic department chair journal. Dr. Hlavac's research interests focus on the use of organizational and departmental missions to prioritize decision-making and the utility of mission-based management in the administration of the contemporary university.



Carolyn Engle

Cellist

Carolyn Engle joined the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Ventre in 1978. This inspired her to pursue a career as a professional cellist.

She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the Hartt School of Music, and her Master of Music degree from the University of Connecticut. Carolyn teaches General Music and Chorus in a New Britain Elementary School. She is a church organist as well as an accomplished cellist and pianist. She has appeared as cello soloist with the Bristol Symphony Orchestra and the Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra. On piano, she has performed concerti with the Farmington Orchestra and the Concert Chamber Orchestra. She is principal cellist of the Wallingford, New Britain, Temple Beth El, and Nutmeg Symphonies and appears regularly with Connecticut Virtuosi. She's also an active participant in the Global Cello Society.

Carolyn was one of three cellists selected as part of a nationwide audition tour to perform for a summer as part of the Walt Disney All-American College Orchestra, where she spent three months working with over a dozen musicians in the entertainment industry, including Tom Scott, Mike Post, Richard Carpenter, and The Rockettes.

Ms. Engle has earned recognition with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra as an elementary school music teacher. She was also honored with the Holmes Elementary School Above and Beyond Award. She was the recipient of the Frederick Schorr Memorial Award.

Currently, Carolyn is the cellist and emcee of a string quartet that specializes in music by The Beatles. The quartet performs at senior centers, libraries, and museums.

In addition to her active musical career, Carolyn enjoys riding roller coasters and other thrill rides. A student of Tae Kwon Do for the past 25 years, she recently earned her Third Dan. She loves spending time with her daughter Heather and her fiancé Michael.



Jessie Joy Wills

Trumpet

Jessie Joy Wills is native to Connecticut and currently resides and teaches in New Britain. In preparation for her career as a music teacher in Connecticut's public schools, Jessie attended the University of Connecticut where she earned a B.S. in music education and B.A. in music.

After completing these degrees she continued her education at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, where she earned a Master of Music in trumpet performance. Jessie maintains a professional performing career playing with many groups around the state of Connecticut and Massachusetts including Bridgeport and Wallingford Symphony Orchestras

She is also equally comfortable performing on trumpet, cornet and the corno da caccia.

Her private students continue to receive top ratings at regional and state festivals. Her trumpet teachers include Dan Patrylak, Gene Young, James Ackely and Phil Collins.

*"Music begins
where the possibilities of language end."*

Jean Sibelius



Janice Setzer

Violin

WSO violinist Janice Setzer was born and raised in South Jersey and began her violin lessons at age 9 in the Moorestown, NJ public school summer music program.

She received a Bachelors Degree in Violin from the Hartt College of Music, University of Hartford.

After graduation, Janice remained in Connecticut to begin her musical career. Besides playing with the WSO since 1974, she is also a longtime violinist with the Waterbury, New Britain and Nutmeg symphonies.

Along with her musical activities, she was a reservations representative with American Airlines for 29 years. Janice resides in West Hartford with her husband John Robertson.

*“Music is a higher revelation
than all wisdom and philosophy.
Music is the electrical soil
in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents.”*

Ludwig van Beethoven



Suzanne Corey-Sahlin

Viola

Suzanne Corey-Sahlin is Principal Violist of the Ridgefield Symphony and the Norwalk Symphony, with which she has also appeared as a soloist. She studied with Albert Markov, Jesse Levine, Robert Glazer, and Steve Larson, as well as with the Manhattan String Quartet at Music Mountain for two years.

Her orchestral experience includes performances with the Delaware Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, Waterbury Symphony, and Wallingford Symphony, where she will perform Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante this October. She has also appeared with Berkshire Opera Company and Connecticut Grand Opera.

Suzanne was a member of the Rondo Chamber Orchestra, touring with Albert Markov and his son Alex Markov, including a performance at Carnegie Hall and engagements along the East Coast. She spent eight years as a member of the Tourmaline String Quartet, which held a residency with the Ridgefield Symphony. The quartet performed widely throughout Fairfield County and New York, with appearances at Vassar, Marist, and Bard Colleges; Marymount Fordham University (where she also served on the faculty); and the Keeler Tavern Museum in Ridgefield.

Her performance credits extend to productions of Porgy and Bess and Phantom of the Opera across the United States, Japan, and South America. She was also a regular member of the Shubert Theater in New Haven. More recently, she has enjoyed success with the Ridgefield Symphony Quartet, performing at prestigious venues such as the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield and MOCA in Westport. She has had the pleasure of performing works by, and alongside, her former teacher, the legendary violinist Albert Markov.

Suzanne frequently collaborates with her husband Gunnar as "Duetto Viello," performing viola and cello duets both old and new. Together, they have participated in the Chamber Music Institute in Darien as well as in Maine and Vermont, including a 2018 tour to Japan. In 2019, both performed at David Geffen Hall in New York City as part of Chinese cultural celebrations.

In addition to her performing career, Suzanne served for seven years as conductor of the String Ensemble of the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra. She continues to teach privately at her studio at St. Andrew's Church in Ridgefield.

The WSO Chairs

Each year a designated chair of honor is given to a WSO musician by special donors. Some are furnished by a charitable foundation and others as a tribute or in memory of a loved one.

Performers that are honored with chairs for 2025-2026 season are:

Philip T. Ventre, Founder and Music Director

- *Wadsworth Family Foundation Chair*

Nina Crothers, Concertmaster

- *Elizabeth Mushinsky Mitchell Family Fund Chair*
In memory of Elizabeth Mitchell

Elizabeth Kitson, Principal Flute

- *The Ithaca Foundation Chair*

James Walker, Percussion

- John Henderson II*
• *In memory of Barbara Henderson*

Jody Rowitsch, Principal Viola

- *In memory of WSO violist Polly Shulga Noonan*

Carolyn Engle, Principal Violincello

- *In honor of the James H. Napier Foundation*

Susan Cheng, Principal Piano and Keyboard

- *In memory of John and Ida Shulga*

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Jamie Marcie, Principal French Horn

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Elton John

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Meet the Musicians

VIOLIN 1

Nina Crothers, concertmaster
Edita Orlinyte
Krystyana Czeiner
James Czeiner
Grace Coolidge
Janice Setzer

VIOLIN 2

Stephanie Hug, principal
Chie Yoshinaka Matejek
Meridith Bryant
Dana Saccomano
Sofia Nangle
Susan Kaufman

VIOLA

Amy Selig, principal
Amy Jones
Nadya Potemkina
Suzanne Corey-Sahlin

CELLO

Carolyn Engle, principal
Corinne Cunha
Cheryl Labrecque
Sarah Shreder

BASS

Joseph Russo, principal
David Uhl

FLUTE

Elizabeth Kitson, principal
Aimee Toner

PICCOLO

Arielle Burke

OBOE

Tamar Beach Wells, principal
Kirsten Hadden-Lipkens

CLARINET

James Forgey, principal
Julie Levene

BASSOON

T.D. Ellis, principal
Jackie Sifford Joyner

Philip T. Ventre, Founder and Music Director

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Kathryn Twombly
Marjie Seymour Callaghan
Amelia Caruk

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Craig Hlavac
Jessie Wills

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*“Music embodies feeling without forcing it to contend
and combine with thought, as it is forced in most arts
and especially in the art of words.”*

Franz Liszt



Elizabeth Mushinsky Mitchell Family Fund

Mitchell Family Strings Competition Children's Concert Series

Elizabeth Mushinsky Mitchell was born in 1936, the youngest of seven children. She grew up in Wallingford and graduated valedictorian of Lyman Hall High School. After receiving a bachelor of art degree from Brown University in Providence, RI, she returned to her hometown and started a career in journalism writing for the Meriden Record (now the Record-Journal). Elizabeth married Alphonsus Mitchell in 1960, lived in New Haven and Hamden until 1967, and returned to Wallingford where she remained until she passed away in January 2015.

A dedicated mother and citizen of Wallingford, Elizabeth was involved in the activities of her children and volunteered at their schools, as well as on civic committees. It was through her volunteering as part of the Wallingford Bicentennial Commission that she became involved with the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra. Having returned to writing at the Record-Journal, she wrote a feature story about the WSO when it was being organized; and she was so excited about the program that she volunteered to join the Board, serving multiple terms as its president. While she helped create such events as the symphony's Johann Strauss Ball and big-band dinners, it is the WSO's children's concert series that held a special place in her heart. She also aided in growing the WSO by establishing performances in neighboring towns. It was very important to her that everyone have access to the arts, no matter where they lived. To her, the arts were crucial to a human life filled with beauty, emotion, empathy, and inspiration.

The scope of Elizabeth's support of the arts reached well beyond the WSO. Her children attended Choate Rosemary Hall, and she worked there for the better of 25 years in the admissions office. She supported the Choate Chamber Orchestra by joining the student musicians during summer performance tours in France, Italy, Greece, and Spain. In the years prior to her death, she played a behind-the-scenes role in helping Choate students establish a program of free music instruction for local children through the Spanish Community of Wallingford.

Outside of Wallingford, Elizabeth's second home was Maine. The Mitchell family vacationed there almost every year. She would revel in the scenery, air, wind, and water; sharing her joy with anyone back home who would care to listen. Elizabeth spent almost all her life enriching Wallingford and her family with her innate curiosity about the world. Her legacy lives on in her children and grandchildren and through the Concertmaster Chair dedicated in her name; inspiring beauty, emotion, and empathy for all to witness.



Uria and Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Children's Concert Series

Uria and Johanna Manfreda Fishbein were lifelong residents of Wallingford, both graduating from Lyman Hall High School in 1933. They married in 1938, joining together two prominent Wallingford families that were both immigrant settlers taking an active role in the development of their town. Uria was the youngest of four children whose father ran a bakery. He and his brother ran an insurance agency in town for almost 50 years. He served in the U.S. Merchant Marines during WWII. Johanna was the youngest of 11 children whose father ran a shoeshine business at the Wallingford Railroad Station. They raised two children and were married nearly 60 years until Johanna passed away in 1997. Uria passed away in 2004.

Johanna started dancing at the age of six and didn't stop until the day she died because it was her connection to the world. She and her sisters would perform at the then Gaylord Farms for the patients. Johanna continued to star in musical productions throughout her school years and beyond. She taught ballroom dancing and etiquette classes to the local children for almost 50 years, also choreographing and directing many productions in the area.

Always a familiar face around town, Johanna was affectionately known as "The First Lady of Celebration" and "Mrs. Wallingford". She served on many church, town, and state committees throughout her life. Johanna was a member of Wallingford Symphony's first Board of Directors, during her tenure she founded and organized the Children's Concert Series, an accomplishment that can be deemed one of her proudest moments. In 1991, she received the Archdiocesan Medal of Appreciation, an award given to those who exemplify invaluable service to their parish on a voluntary basis. Johanna was the first member of Holy Trinity Church to receive this honor.

Faith, family, and friends were the cornerstones of Johanna's life. She was first and foremost a devout Catholic and devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who enjoyed her children's activities; as well as a Yankees game, a day at the beach, and a Broadway show. Though little, she was mighty; and her innate heroic spirit blessed all who knew her. In 1995, the Wallingford Railroad Station green and gazebo were named the Johanna Manfreda Fishbein Park. It is on this very spot that her father represented Wallingford to those looking for a home, raising an American flag every day while shining shoes to support his family. Five generations later, his family continues the work he started a century ago all because of the life, love, and commitment of Johanna and Uria.



The WSO Endowment Fund

In 2018 the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors established an Endowment Fund. The purpose of this fund is to help offset the increasing costs of performances. Our Maestro and musicians are all paid professionals that come to us from throughout the state. In addition to their salaries and fees for guest soloists, there are administrative costs incurred when producing a concert. The WSO is responsible for paying the stage personnel who work behind the scenes (management, lighting, sound). We also pay music rental, publication, and advertising fees.

The intent of the Endowment Fund is to invest the donations, using only the interest acquired each year from the investment. We are a 501C3 organization therefore your donation is eligible as a tax deduction. It is our hope that the Endowment Fund and planned use of interest will help to sustain our presence, continuing to benefit those in the Wallingford area and surrounding communities for years to come.



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