A Brief History

In August 1934, a group of music-loving Berkshire summer residents arranged for members of the New York Philharmonic to perform three outdoor concerts in Interlaken, MA, a successful venture that was repeated in 1935. The Festival Committee then invited Serge Koussevitzky to conduct the BSO at Holmwood (now Fox Hollow) on August 13, 1936, the BSO gave its first concert in the Berkshires in a large tent for an audience of nearly 15,000. The orchestra's Trustees accepted, and the first Tanglewood concert was held on August 5, 1937, at Holmwood, the Tappan family estate, with its buildings and 210 acres of lawns and meadows, as a gift to the orchestra. Mary Aspinwall Tappan offered Tanglewood, the festival's largest crowd so far, assembled under a tent for the first Tanglewood concert, an all-Beethoven program.

Explore Tanglewood

The Tanglewood Tours Program is supported by a generous gift from Nancy and Richard Lubin and Family.
Begin your tour at the Koussevitzky Music Shed near the Main Gate.

1. KOUSSEVITZKY MUSIC SHED—For its fiftieth anniversary in 1988, the Shed was rededicated as “The Serge Koussevitzky Music Shed”, in honor of the legendary BSO music director and founder of Tanglewood. The Shed seats 5,100 people, and the surrounding lawn can accommodate more than 13,000. Popular artist concerts often draw crowds that large.

2. HIGHWOOD GATE—The Highwood Gate, with its seasonal gift shop, auxiliary box office, and coaching studio, welcomes patrons to enjoy concerts every summer. Across the lawn you will see the Tanglewood Café just over the rise.

3. BERNSTEIN CAMPUS—The Tanglewood Music Center (TMC) campus is named in honor of the late Leonard Bernstein, an alumnus of the inaugural 1940 class. Since its start as the Berkshire Music Center, the TMC has become one of the world’s most influential centers for advanced musical study in addition to Ozawa Hall, it includes the TMC offices and teaching studios in the Leon Fleisher Carriage House, plus the Maple Studio, several chamber music studios, and the Aaron Copland Memorial Library.

4. SEJI OZAWA HALL—The centerpiece of the Bernstein Campus, Seiji Ozawa Hall, was designed by William Rawn Associates with acoustician Lawrence Kirkegaard and was named after the longtime BSO music director (1973–2002). The 1,275-seat hall has been acclaimed for its outstanding acoustics and in addition to regular chamber music concerts is used frequently for recording sessions.

5. LINDE CENTER FOR MUSIC AND LEARNING—The Linde Center for Music and Learning provides rehearsal and performance space for the TMC and a home for the Tanglewood Learning Institute, a creative enrichment program that inspires spirited dialogue about music, the arts, and the human spirit. A year-round base of operations for the BSO in the Berkshires, the facility is also available for use by Tanglewood’s Berkshire neighbors.

6. HIGHWOOD MANOR HOUSE—Highwood existed before Tanglewood as one of the earliest well-known Berkshire estates and summer retreats. Altered and enlarged over the years, it now houses function spaces, administrative offices, and a restaurant for concertgoers.

7. HAWTHORNE COTTAGE—Across Hawthorne Road from the Lions Gate is the “Little Red House”—a replica of the farm outbuilding in which Nathaniel Hawthorne lived in 1850 and 1851. Here, he wrote most of The House of Seven Gables. It was Hawthorne who introduced the name “Tanglewood” into American literature in 1868, written in 1873. Located here is the TMC’s composition program, which has nurtured alumni such as Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, John Adams, and Michael Gandolfi.

8. TAPPAN MANOR HOUSE (VISITORS CENTER)—This Victorian “cottage” survives from the 1880s—the former estate of the Tappan Family. It serves as a Visitors Center, and houses a large BSO archival exhibit and management offices. Behind the house are the stunning Formal Gardens and the Whispering Bench.

9. THEATRE—The Eero Saarinen-designed Theatre is situated at the west end of the grounds opposite the Shed. Prior to the construction of Ozawa Hall, the Theatre housed TMC Orchestra performances. Currently, the Theatre is used for TMC rehearsals and master classes.

10. GIFT SHOPS—A favorite stop for Tanglewood visitors in season are two gift shops, located adjacent to the Main Gate and near the Highwood Gate. Stop by during the summer months for Tanglewood souvenirs and gifts.