

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Steven Reineke, Principal Pops Conductor

# The Doo Wop Project

**Steven Reineke**, conductor  
**The Doo Wop Project**, vocal group

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Program selections to be announced  
from the stage.

*Program 3*

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Tuesday,  
October 3, 2023  
8:00pm

Wednesday,  
October 4, 2023  
2:00pm

Wednesday,  
October 4, 2023  
8:00pm

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Steven Reineke made his TSO conducting debut on March 17, 1997, in a program that included music by Jacques Offenbach, Georges Bizet, John Williams, Kurt Weill, Henry Mancini, Leonard Bernstein, Richard Rodgers, and John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

His debut as TSO Principal Pops Conductor was on October 4, 2012, in a program titled *Hollywood Hits*, which featured songs ranging from “Hooray for Hollywood” to Elton John’s “Circle of Life” from *The Lion King*. The 2023/24 season marks the start of his second decade as the TSO’s Principal Pops Conductor.

## Steven Reineke, conductor

Steven Reineke is one of North America’s leading conductors of popular music and is in his second decade as Music Director of The New York Pops at Carnegie Hall. Additionally, he is Principal Pops Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Houston Symphony, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Reineke is a frequent guest conductor and can be seen on the podium with the Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras.

On stage, Reineke creates and collaborates with a range of leading artists from the worlds of hip-hop, R&B, Broadway, television, and rock including Maxwell, Common, Kendrick Lamar, Nas, Ne-Yo, Barry Manilow, Cynthia Erivo, Ben Rector, Cody Fry, Sutton Foster, Megan Hilty, Wayne Brady, Peter Frampton, and Ben Folds, among others. In 2017, he was featured on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered* leading the National Symphony Orchestra—a first in the show’s 45-year history—performing live music excerpts in between news segments. In 2018, Reineke led the National Symphony Orchestra with hip-hop legend Nas performing his seminal album *Illmatic* on PBS’s *Great Performances*.

As the creator of hundreds of orchestral arrangements, Reineke has had his work performed worldwide, and it can be heard on numerous Cincinnati Pops Orchestra recordings. His symphonic works *Celebration Fanfare*, *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and *Casey at the Bat* are performed frequently in North America, including performances by the New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic. His *Sun Valley Festival Fanfare* was used to commemorate the Sun Valley Summer Symphony’s pavilion, and his *Festival Te Deum* and *Swans Island Sojourn* were debuted by the Cincinnati Symphony and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras. His numerous wind ensemble compositions are published by the C.L. Barnhouse Company and are performed by concert bands perennially.

A native of Ohio, Reineke is a graduate of Miami University of Ohio (2020 Alumnus Distinguished Achievement Medal), where he earned Bachelor of Music degrees with honours in both trumpet performance and music composition. He currently resides in New York City with his husband, Eric Gabbard.

## The Doo Wop Project, vocal group

These performances mark The Doo Wop Project's TSO début.

The Doo Wop Project pays homage to the roots of group singing and celebrates the legacy of African American harmonies that laid the foundation for American pop and rock. Tracing back to the early days of tight harmonies on inner-city street corners, this extraordinary show has been embraced by audiences worldwide for its authenticity and vocal excellence. Featuring stars of Broadway's smash hits *Jersey Boys* and *Motown: The Musical*, The Doo Wop Project recreates—and in some cases entirely reimagines—many of the greatest American songs of all time.



**Dominic Nolfi**, a San Francisco native, discovered his passion for performing at a young age and honed his craft at the renowned American Conservatory Theater. He later studied voice at the San Francisco Conservatory and attended the Boston Conservatory on scholarship where he graduated with a BFA in theatre. His Broadway credits include Chazz Palminteri's *A Bronx Tale*, *Motown: The Musical*, and the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Jersey Boys*.



**Nicholas Ward** is honoured to be joining the Doo Wop family. His recent Broadway credits include *The Music Man* (2022 revival) where he played Oliver Hix. Past credits include *The Lion King* (Mufasa), *Frozen* (King Agnarr in the original cast), *In Transit* (Chris in the original cast), and *On the Town* (Workman, Miss Turnstile's Announcer). Ward has also had the great pleasure of performing in New York City Center's Encores! series and at Lincoln Center.



**Jesse Nager** starred as Smokey Robinson in the Broadway revival of *Motown: The Musical*. He was also featured in the original New York productions of *Mamma Mia*, *Mary Poppins*, *Scandalous*, *Good Vibrations*, and *Fame!* He has performed with Mariah Carey and Shania Twain at Madison Square Garden and his vocals have been heard on both seasons of NBC's *Smash* as well as the movie *Hairspray*.



**John Michael Dias**, originally from Tiverton, Rhode Island, earned a BFA in musical theatre from the Boston Conservatory. He made a significant impact as Frankie Valli of the Four Seasons in the smash hit *Jersey Boys*, both on Broadway and in national tours. Dias's portrayal of Neil Sedaka in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* garnered him widespread acclaim. His solo album, *Write This Way*, showcases his intimate takes on Broadway and pop favourites.



**Russell Fischer** was cast in the company of *Jersey Boys* on his 22nd birthday, marking his Broadway début. Fischer starred in the second national tour of *Big The Musical*. Credits include *Baby Fat: Act 1—A Rock Opera* at La MaMa Experimental Theater Club; *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *The Music Man* at Chautauqua Opera; and the American premiere of *Children of Eden* at Paper Mill Playhouse.

# What's in a phrase? Doo-Wop (Doo-Wah)

**"DOO-WOP" IS A MEETING PLACE** for the diverse popular musical influences of the first half of the 1900s—jazz and “scat” vocals, big band arrangements, the emotional pulse of gospel, and the formal structure of barbershop. In it, you can also hear the beginnings of pop in the century’s second half—the amplified, guitar-based beginnings of rock and roll; the intricate vocal arrangements of The Beach Boys, The Beatles, and Queen; and just about every James Bond movie theme! One of the first recorded instances of “doo-wop” as a lyric was by the Delta Rhythm Boys in 1945. But its use as a phrase to describe the genre came years later, in 1961, from a critic writing in *The Chicago Defender*, long after the style and sound were established.

So, why “doo-wop”? First, a bit of context. In the 1930s and ‘40s, large ensembles reigned on the pop charts. Early doo-wop groups couldn’t afford the big band without signing their souls over to the record labels. So they used the range and flexibility of the human voice to emulate the orchestral sounds of the day—four voices and, sometimes, a four-piece rhythm section filling out the sound traditionally covered by 16 musicians or more.

To understand where “doo” came from, break the word out into its parts, and watch the string section! The “d” is the double basses, *pizzicato*, adding an attack before the “oooh” of the note in the violins, bowing long, lush chords in one direction, the way polished doo-wop singers choreograph their breathing and phrasing. To understand “wop”, watch the percussion section, especially the hi-hat clicking away like finger snaps. This music marked the transition from swing and big band to rock



and roll, and the increasing importance of the back beat. Especially as the use of individual microphones became more prevalent, the hard, explosive “p” consonant in “wop” creates the same percussive effect.

For “wah”, turn your attention to the brass and woodwinds, especially the trombones. A good pre-doo-wop example of “vocal brass” would be the opening of “Heebie Jeebies” by the Boswell Sisters, where they use “wah” to emulate trumpets or trombones played with a cup mute being opened and closed.

The critic from *The Chicago Defender* used the phrase “doo-wop” in 1961 in reviewing a recording of “Blue Moon” by The Marcells. By then, their arrangement features more “bop” and “gang” than “doo” or “wah”, to create the electric bass-guitar sound that was becoming more popular at the time. And there are way more “wah”s than “doo”s, perhaps a foreshadowing of the famous guitar pedal that would be introduced to the market five years later.

—Program note by Sophia Perlman