

Program Notes

Leroy Anderson (1908 - 1975) is well known for his timeless arrangements of our favorite holiday music. In his concert overture, *Christmas Festival*, Anderson combines the secular and religious songs and carols *Joy To The World*, *Deck the Halls*, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, *Good King Wenceslas*, *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, *The First Noel*, *Silent Night*, *Jingle Bells*, *O Come* and *All Ye Faithful* into a joyous celebration of the holiday spirit. No holiday concert is complete without Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*. The piece (and its horse mimicking trumpeter!) has become as traditional as candy canes and hot chocolate. Sit back and enjoy the ride!

Another well known American arranger and orchestrator, **Richard Hayman** (b. 1920), has also given the orchestra some of its most exciting and colorful holiday music. *Carol of the Bells* is based on a Ukrainian Epiphany Carol by M. Leontovitch, but in Hayman's typically creative style the basic rhythmic motive of the original carol is exploited and many other classic carols are woven into the piece. The piece climaxes with a fugal or conversational overlaying of the work's main motivic cell and a grand triumphant ending.

George Frideric Händel's (1685-1759) *Messiah* is a Masterpiece of the Baroque period and commands the attention of its audience today just as it did at its premiere in 1742. Here we will present the overture to the grand work as a bit of a teaser – next holiday season we are hoping to perform the entire work, including the famous *Hallelujah Chorus*, in collaboration with local choirs.

Finnish composer **Jean Sibelius** (1865-1957) is a celebrated nationalistic composer – meaning he wrote music that embodied the ideals, emotion, and spirit of his homeland. His most popular work, *Finlandia*, is not a traditional holiday piece, but it certainly presents its listener with a “wintery” theme – the cold. Of course, the cold in this case is both literal and figurative (It's now below freezing in Helsinki!). Although the piece was written as an undercover protest to Russian censorship, perhaps we should instead envision ourselves during the dark brash opening chords fighting our way through the aisles of our favorite super-store looking for this season's must-have gift and then in the climactic ending, having secured the gift, its intended recipient excitedly ripping away its wrapping paper!

Like Anderson's Christmas Festival, **Bill Holcombe's** (b. 1923) *Festive Sounds of Hanukah* inventively weaves together the traditional Hanukah songs, *Rock of Ages*, *Who Can Retell*, *Hanukah Hanukah*, *My Dreidel*, *S'vivon* and *Hanukah Oh Hanukah* in a cheerful celebration of the eight-day Festival of Lights.

Chip Davis (b. 1947), the creator of Mannheim Steamroller, is known for bringing a unique perspective to otherwise traditional music. He defines his music as “18th-century Rock ‘n Roll.” His ability to adapt classical compositions with contemporary pop rhythm and harmony has established Mannheim Steamroller as a household name both in America and abroad. Our performance will utilize a slightly augmented orchestra (electric keyboard and drum-set) with Davis' authentic and original charts to create the perfect end to our celebration of goodwill. Happy Holidays!

Notes by Matthew Wardell