

## Croix Chordsmen Christmas Show 2024

### [PRE-SHOW ANNOUNCEMENTS]

We are about five minutes before the start of the show. If you have been to previous shows by the Chordsmen, you know we are always looking for new members. Well tonight the “boys” are getting serious! You will notice a few of them coming down the aisle with brochures about the chorus.

So, gentlemen, if you like to sing and would enjoy making a few new friends, let the Chordsman in the aisle nearest you know and he will get you the information you need. And don't be shy now. Take a brochure and find some joy!

And ladies ...if you have a husband, brother, son, uncle, cousin, neighbor, or co-worker who just needs to get off the couch and out of the house, raise your hand and we will give you a brochure to pass on to that “Guy.” We'll even pick him up on Tuesday nights for rehearsal and bring him home smiling.

That's all for now! We'll be back to start the show in just a few minutes.

[SHOW START]

Welcome to the Croix Chordsmen 2024 Christmas Show! We are so glad to sing for you this afternoon, and we are very excited for our special guests from Stillwater Area High School Chamber Choirs who will perform later in the show.

Our show theme this year is Christmas memories and traditions, past and present, so we're going to have some fun and share memories and traditions from the Croix Chordsmen themselves! But before that, let's take a moment to remember that 83 years ago today, our nation suffered the tragic events at Pearl Harbor that launched us into WWII, and it seems appropriate that we acknowledge that memory now with a moment of silent reflection.

Thank you. Some Chordsmen traditions are relatively recent! For example, the Chordsmen didn't always offer a Christmas show. **Judd Orff** recalls how this got started:

I joined the chorus in 1970. It was just a small group. Mac Barlass really pushed caroling. He wanted us to go up and down the streets of Stillwater and sing in all of the stores, but then Doc said, "You really need to come down to River Falls. We have three really nice nursing homes and they would really like to hear you guys sing." So we would gather at Carl Quist's camera shop and carpool down to River Falls. We had set of songs we sang and then wished everybody a Merry Christmas. Very appreciative audiences. That was a lot of fun. I believe we started doing Christmas shows in the 80's when Jim Hall started directing, and we shared the stage with the Sweet Adelines. We started featuring high school groups in the early 2000's.

Thanks, Judd, for that history! So the Chordsmen are always evolving. Many of the guys now use computer tablets to read their music! We embrace change wherever it enables more men to join us. If you're not sure about standing on the risers, we'll find a way to accommodate you and meet you where you are. We want to share this great hobby with all men who are interested in singing with us.

So let's get started!

Have your best laid plans ever gone awry but then things turned out better than expected? **Allen Althof** recalls such a time:

When I was a little kid, we were to go to this farmhouse that was over the hill to this village. They invited us over. Dad cleaned out the bobsled because it had a whole bunch of straw in it. It really started snowing before we took off and because it had snowed previously there was already snow on the road. With the bobsled and a team of horses though, we made it over the hill and down to the farmhouse. We had a great time. But with it snowing so hard, we decided to leave early. We got in the bobsled and had to go back up that long hill. Queenie, the mare, fell into the snowbank. Tom, the big ol' male horsie, was plowing away but couldn't go anywhere because Queenie was stuck. Dad was smart enough to bring a scoop shovel along, So they were scooping to get Queenie up and evidently decided we couldn't go up the hill anymore so we turned around and went back to the farmhouse. It was the first time I ever slept in a featherbed. It was great! Just wonderful!

Please welcome, under the direction of Jay Althof, the Croix Chordsmen Chorus.

### Jingle Bells

Do you recall a favorite toy you received one Christmas? **Jerry Herbst** remembers one such toy:

When I was five years old, I was thrilled when I received as a Christmas gift a Lionel electric train. It was all set up right next to the Christmas tree. Besides the engine, it had a coal car, several box cars, a barrel car, and a caboose. The tracks crossed a bridge and went through a tunnel. We had a lot of the relatives over including my uncles Tony and Sylvester. But soon I became very frustrated to the point that I almost cried. First, my uncles spent so much time playing with it that I couldn't have a turn to operate it. Then when my turn finally came, I turned the transformer up full blast, and the train flew off the tracks. Eventually I did learn to operate it and had a ball with it. Today, that train is eighty-two years old. It's been a few years since I've set it up, but I believe it still runs.

**Allen Althof** remembers a favorite toy that just needed a few tweaks:

I was so thrilled because I got this barn that you put together that was made out of cardboard and was so nice and shiny. And the only thing I could think of is there was no silo so I told Mom, "Mom! I want the Quaker Oats container for a silo!"

Toyland

Does your family have a favorite Christmas Eve tradition?

Since 2006 **Ed Obermeyer-Kolb**'s family has spent Christmas Eve making gingerbread houses. It's a time to be creative and spend time to with each other in the Christmas spirit.

**Loren Paulson** recalls, while growing up on the farm, the Christmas ham that his mother prepared:

This was a fresh ham. Not a smoked ham purchased from the store but a fresh ham from a butchered pig from the farm. On Christmas Day morning this ham was sliced up cold and served on a piece of toast with a thin coating of mustard. It was truly wonderful. Mother was a wonderful cook and us 5 boys growing up on the farm were always very well fed.

**Mark Bergland**'s parents stayed up late every Christmas Eve getting the presents ready:

My father was a great joker. I wish I had inherited his comedic timing and delivery. For all of our presents, he would write some four-line poem that was humorous and that gave a hint to what was in the box. He would stay up until three in the morning doing all of this.

And finally, **Jim Otto** shares this sweet memory:

Our church service on Christmas Eve was always the kids program. The songs and scripture were done by the kids. When we got dismissed, we would come down the middle aisle, and at the doorway coming out the sanctuary, the church council had put together big huge bags of candy and apples and oranges. So every kid came out and would get this big paper bag stuffed with candy and fruit. That was like the church send-off.

To sing about their Christmas Eve traditions, please welcome the Hometown Gang!

Christmas Eve in My Hometown  
Hometown Gang – Lee Wyland, Joel Ortman, Loren Paulson, Merlin  
Friesen

Especially for the children, Christmas is magical.

**Mark Bergland** shares this wonderful story:

This was a tradition when I was a kid. Every Christmas Eve our family would go to the late candlelight service. Afterwards, we would always go out and look at Christmas lights for maybe half hour or forty-five minutes. My Mom would always say, "Do you have the Christmas spirit yet? Do you have the Christmas spirit yet?" And after awhile [*and at this moment, while sharing this memory, Mark paused with an amazed look on his face and said*] - in fact I'm getting it right now, it's like a chill that goes over you, this magical feeling of the Christmas spirit. I'm actually getting it right now. This is so bizarre, I haven't had this in years! [*Then Mark grinned and continued his story*] - As soon as we all had the Christmas spirit, we would go home.

Please welcome back the Chordsmen with Assistant Director Lee Wyland.

Secret of Christmas

Is singing Christmas carols together part of your Christmas tradition?

**Jeff Kolstad** has fond memories of country grade school Christmas musical plays. All the farm community neighbors showed up, like it was Carnegie Hall. It seemed so magical at the time.

Our next tune will feature Roger Bosmoe, Cliff Turnbull, Duane Hall, and Tad Jennings.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

When Jay Livingston and Ray Evans wrote our next song, they originally called it “Tinkle Bells”, that is, until Jay went home and told his wife and she said, “Are you out of your mind?” This tune reminds us of the tradition of store front bell ringers sounding the call for charity and gratitude in anticipation of the season.

Please welcome Just4Fun!

#### Silver Bells

Just4Fun Quartet (Brian Schultz, Ed Obermeyer-Kolb, Walt Ogburn, Tad Jennings)



Do you have a Christmas memory that connects you to the true meaning of Christmas? Let's hear **Bill Kruschel's** story:

My Dad was a just a great guy, and we had a little home on the east side of Saint Paul. He had the big living room set up so that he could close it off completely. We weren't allowed to even peek in the door until Christmas Day. Boy, oh boy! I can still remember looking at that tree. How did you ever get a tree that big into this room, you know? And the Christmas presents just went on and on and on. To go with it, there was a nice hill where we could slide and we could go skiing in the neighborhood. So it made Christmas a great time of my life. Then unfortunately, Dad died in 1933 when I was eight years old, and we moved to a farm out in old Cottage Grove. It was a 160 acre farm, no water in the house, no electricity, no telephone. I just felt so sorry for my Mother, but it all worked out, and even though we didn't have much in the way of Christmas presents, there's one I'll never forget. She was a prolific knitter and she knitted me a pair of knee socks that were white with a green top to go over my boots.

These gifts of love remind us of what Christmas is all about.

O Holy Night

We greet Christmas Day with such joy! And these guys love to share that joy with their fellow patrons every Tuesday night after practice. Please welcome Charlie's Crooners!

I Saw Three Ships

Charlie's Crooners (Lee Wyland, Jay Althof, Dan Valentine, Tad Jennings)

As you might imagine, close harmony singing is a cherished tradition for our guys. **Don Paulson** recalls:

I grew up on a farm with 4 brothers. Before Christmas, the church organist would always ask my mother if "the boys" would be home for Christmas, and would they please sing for the Christmas Eve service? After our Christmas dinner consisting of lutefisk, Swedish potato sausage and the exchanging of gifts, the whole family was off to the 11PM candlelight Christmas Eve service. We did this for many years, probably singing the same songs. Then, after the service, we all went back to the farm for a variety of my mother's Swedish Christmas cookies, fruit cake, and punch.

**Walt Ogburn's** family observed a similar tradition:

We had a family tradition of Christmas Eve Dinner at Grandma's house. Our tradition was mashed potatoes, Swedish meatballs, and peas which we rolled up together in our lefse. Our non-Scandinavian grandma said, "All year long you teach the kids manners and on Christmas Eve you let them roll their meal up in a napkin to eat it." After dinner we'd head to church for the Christmas Eve service. I always enjoyed singing the traditional Christmas carols, but it got even better when we got older and my mom would sing soprano, my younger sister would sing alto, my brother-in-law would sing tenor, and I'd sing bass. Nothing quite like a family quartet in the same pew!!

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Of course, we relish any opportunity to simply sing together. **Cliff Turnbull** knows this well:

When I was a kid, we'd get the extended family together for Christmas dinner. After we were all stuffed from that, we'd gather around the piano and sing Christmas songs. We didn't have iPhones and game machines and over-size TV screens to distract the youth, so parents could more easily keep the kids focused on the singing. We all lived in the country, so that helped keep the kids involved in the family stuff since they had nowhere to go.

It is never too late to revive cherished Christmas traditions.

White Christmas

Before you know it, it is getting late and it is time to hitch up the horses again. Please welcome back Charlie's Crooners!

### Sleigh Ride

Charlie's Crooners (Lee Wyland, Jay Althof, Dan Valentine, Tad Jennings)

In the 1920's there was a small concert hall in midtown Manhattan known as "Jingle Bell Square", and young people who loved to dance would meet at Jingle Bell Square. Now this was a year-round activity with holiday themed events including drinking hot chocolate and wearing festive suits and sweaters adorned with round "jingle bells." These bells created their own rhythm on top of the song's beat and were considered integral to the music.

The slang term "jinglehorse," referred to the dancers themselves. A live band would play rock music and everyone would dance until sunrise, incorporating popular steps like the Bop and the Stroll, as well as a modified Conga line they called the "One-Horse Sleigh."

Unfortunately, Jingle Bell Square burned down in 1923 and its devotees moved on and the experience became just a distant memory. Until 1957, when Bobby Helms decided to write a song about it. So strap on your bells, you jinglehorse! And mix and a-mingle in the jingling feet, and join in the one-horse sleigh!

### Jingle Bell Rock

Now we are going to reset the stage for our special guests. While that is happening behind me, I would like to tell you about some upcoming opportunities.

If you'd like to see more of the Croix Chordsmen or our quartets, we have two upcoming events. The first is Friday, February 14th to celebrate Valentine's Day. We have a long-running tradition of quartets going out into the community to deliver Singing Valentines. For about \$40, you can have one of our talented quartets come to your home, business, or restaurant to sing traditional Valentine's songs to your loved ones or co-workers. To schedule and purchase your personalized Singing Valentine, just fill out the form on our chorus website. You'll also find information about Singing Valentines in today's printed program.

The next event to get on your calendar is our annual spring show. On Saturday, April 26th right here at Trinity, you'll be able to be a part of "The Croix College Glee Club Reunion". We'll perform some of your favorite songs from the 50's, 60's, and 70's. Back by popular demand will be our featured quartet, our own Vocality. Mark your calendars now and watch the website for more information as the date gets closer.

As Christmas approaches, we are often reminded of the less fortunate among us. Each year the Chordsmen select a local non-profit to highlight and support. For 2024 the chorus selected FamilyMeans. Based in Stillwater, FamilyMeans provides services in the St. Croix Valley, the Twin Cities metro, southeastern Minnesota, and western Wisconsin. The FamilyMeans mission is "Supporting individuals and families through challenges in all stages of life." The Chordsmen will share our music at FamilyMeans events and will also share proceeds from our shows with them. If you would like to make a personal "Holiday" donation to FamilyMeans, please note they have donation boxes in our lobby this afternoon.

Now back to our show.

One of the highlights of every Croix Chordsmen Christmas show is the opportunity to feature a local high school vocal ensemble. We have featured ensembles from throughout the St. Croix Valley and it is always a thrill to witness their unique talents and to receive their gift of love through music.

One cannot overstate the impact that youth ensembles, whether in high schools or in churches, have on a young person's life, and regardless of whether these students go on to sing professionally or simply sing as a hobby, these ensembles, and the wonderful directors that lead them, lay a strong foundation for a fulfilling life with music. Let me share one case in point.

This past October at the Land O' Lakes District Convention, our own Bill Kruschel joined members of the Vocality quartet on-stage to woodshed an old chestnut. The audience ate it up! That is not surprising as Bill made a long career singing professionally and is no stranger to the stage. He started singing early in life. As young boy, the youth choir at his church was an inspiration to him. Bill expressed it this way:

That started my singing career, in the church choir. So it was good for all three of us kids you know? And I haven't told you this, but my little sister now is 98 and my little brother is 96.

And just like Bill, who at the age of 99 is on-stage this afternoon with the Chordsmen, there is no doubt that the singers gathered behind me and before me are also well on their way to a rewarding musical life.

Please welcome, under the direction of Angela Mitchell, the **Stillwater Area High School combined All Chamber Choirs**.

Carol of the Bells - M. Leontovich, arr. Peter Wilhousky



Our next performers are select singers in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. Their dedication to their craft is evident as they practice twice a week, before school, at 7am. Please welcome, under the direction of Katelyn Sawatzke, the **Stillwater Area High School 9-10 Chamber Choir**.

A Winter Wish - MaryAnne Muglia

From that fresh take on a favorite Christmas carol, the choir next explores the classic choral tradition with this beautifully composed setting for a Latin sacred text: O Great Mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the newborn Lord lying in a manger.

O Magnum Mysterium - Evan Ramos

At this time of year, we hear this familiar greeting all the time, but never as beautifully or with so much joy!

30-Second Merry Christmas - Donald Moore

Joining our performers for their next tune are the **Select Women Chamber Choir**, who are treble singers in the 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. They also rehearse twice weekly but after school.

Deck the Hall - Traditional Welsh

Thank you **9-10 Chamber Choir!** Please now enjoy more songs from the **Select Women Chamber Choir.** Their next selection presents a lush soundscape of high voices in tight harmony.

My Lord Has Come - Will Todd

Written in the style of an Acadian folk song, the words of this next tune may elude you!

Vichten - Angèle Arsenault, arr. Hart Rouge

The choir's next selection is a Christmas favorite composed by Robert Wells and Mel Torme and made popular by Nat King Cole.

The Christmas Song - Mel Torme and Robert Wells, arr. Kirby Shaw

Thank you **Select Women Chamber Choir!** Our next performers for the afternoon are select singers auditioned from the Stillwater Area High School Concert Choir. Like the other choirs, the work they put in to prepare for this performance today is in addition to their regular school obligations. They simply love to sing and they want to share that love with you. Please welcome, under the direction of Angela Mitchell, the **Vagabonds**.

Gaudete - arr. Mark Burrows  
In Dulci Jubilo - Matthew Culloton  
Ding Dong Merrily on High - arr. Caroline Jennings  
Silent Night - arr. Maryanne Muglia  
Good King Kong - PDQ Bach

We have reached the end of our show this afternoon and as the Chordsmen return to the stage, we thank you again for attending, and we want to acknowledge everyone who made this show possible.

Thanks to our Show Chair, Walt Ogburn and his team of Jay Althof, Lee Wyland, Todd Smith, and Jim Otto.

Thanks to Angie Orff and Vickie Wyland for being hosts to our groups today, and thanks to the 6 individuals out there who volunteered to be our ushers.

Thanks to Phil, Ashton, and Christian Kadidlo back in the booth for running the cameras and audio and lights.

Thanks to our featured quartets:

Hometown Gang!

Just4Fun!

Charlie's Crooners!

Thanks to our special guests, the Stillwater Area High School Chamber Choir ensembles. Under the direction of Katelyn Sawatzke, the 9-10 Chamber choir!

And the Select Women Chamber Choir!

And under the direction of Angela Mitchell, the Vagabonds!

And finally, under the direction of Jay Althof and Lee Wyland, the Croix Chordsmen Chorus!

We all have one final wish for all of you.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas  
All Singers