



HOLIDAY FAVORITES

PROGRAM NOTES – DECEMBER 2023

A MOST WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS

Born in 1954, Robert Sheldon studied at the University of Miami and the University of Florida. He has taught extensively in Florida and Illinois, including at Florida State University and the University of Florida, and taught clinics around the world. For seventeen years, he was Director of Concert Band Publications at Alfred Music.

Some of the most popular Christmas selections of all time are included in this delightful arrangement, such as Winter Wonderland, I'll Be Home for Christmas, Santa Claus is Comin' To Town, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, and It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.



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FAIREST OF THE FAIR

Jari Villanueva retired from the United States Air Force where he spent 23 years with The United States Air Force Band in Washington DC. While in the band he served as a trumpeter, bugler, assistant drum major, staff arranger and music copyist. He is considered the country's foremost expert on military bugle calls, particularly the call of Taps which is sounded at military funerals. While in the Air Force he was the Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge of The USAF Band's State Funeral Plans and was the NCOIC of the command post at Andrews AFB which oversaw the arrival and departure ceremonies for the late Presidents Reagan and Ford. As a ceremonial trumpeter, Villanueva participated in well over 5,000 ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, served as an assistant drum major leading The USAF Ceremonial Brass in funerals at Arlington. He was responsible for all the music performed by the USAF Bands for state funerals. Between 1998-2002 Villanueva created a display at Arlington National Cemetery highlighting the history of the military bugler. He was responsible for moving the bugle used at President John F. Kennedy's funeral from the Smithsonian to Arlington where it is currently on display. In 2007 Villanueva was inducted into the Buglers Hall of Fame, the first active duty military bugler to be so honored.

Born in 1854, John Philip Sousa was an arranger, a composer, a conductor, a business man, and a patriot. He is particularly honored for his marches and his concert bands. His eminent cornet soloist, Herbert L. Clarke, wrote that "in addition to his March King title, Sousa should have been called King of the Concert Band."

One of Sousa's favorite sayings was "A horse, a dog, a gun, a girl, and music on the side. That is my idea of heaven." When all of his march titles are examined, Sousa's appreciation of the fairer sex is obvious. In this instance the subject was a pretty girl who worked at the annual Boston Food Fair. Even though the March King never met the young lady, her memory inspired this title when he was preparing a new march for the food fair in 1908. The work is generally regarded as one of his most melodic and best-written marches.



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SYMPHONY ON THEMES OF JOHN PHILIP SOUSA – III. AFTER “FAIREST OF THE FAIR”

Composer Ira Hearshen received his Bachelor of Music degree in applied theory and composition from Wayne State University. In 1972, he moved to Los Angeles to study orchestration at the Grove School of Music under the tutelage of the film composer, Albert Harris. He also studied counterpoint under Allyn Ferguson. Hearshen has many arrangements to his credit including the Detroit Symphony Pine Knob Summer Series, the Summer Pops Series for John Denver with various symphonies, the Jacksonville (FL) Symphony, and the Air Combat Heritage Band. He is currently one of the most sought-after orchestrators in Hollywood. His orchestrations include music for the television series “Beauty and the Beast,” the Broadway show “Into the Light” and feature films “Guarding Tess,” “Big Business,” and “The Three Musketeers.”

This selection is the third movement in a symphony that Hearshen composed, with each movement tied to the elements in a specific Sousa march (“Washington Post,” “The Thunderer,” “Fairest of the Fair,” and “Hands Across the Sea”). The overall piece is written in classical symphonic form. The primary unifying element across the movements is the melodic four-note motif that in C-major or A-minor would be the notes C-B-C-A. In *Fairest of the Fair*, this appears in the first strain of the march. As with most scherzo movements in classical symphonies, this is light and dance like, often poking fun at itself through musical humor.

ELEGY FOR A YOUNG AMERICAN

Sixty years ago last month, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy stunned our nation and the world. Five months after his death, the Indiana Wind Ensemble premiered “Elegy for a Young American”, dedicated to his memory. The work takes the listener back through the stages of mourning as the music unfolds. A tone of respect and solemnity at the beginning yields to feelings of shock and denial, reflected by the dynamics and octave jumps in the melody. Anger and remorse are replaced with resolution and celebration, before the piece closes with a *maestoso* reminder of our loss.



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ST. LOUIS BLUES MARCH

W.C. Handy, the Father of the Blues, was born in Alabama 150 years ago on November 16, 1873. After experimenting with using his mother's pots and pans (and anything else he could find) as percussion instruments, he fell in love with the sound of the cornet and bought one for a dollar. He learned to play it without any instruction, and at the age of 20 was a cornet soloist at the Chicago World's Fair. He first heard the blues from an elderly man at a deserted railroad station, and was intrigued. He wrote his first blues, "Mr. Crump", in 1909, and went on to compose over 150 other songs and arrangements (mostly blues). St. Louis Blues March, published in 1914, was his most famous and successful song, bringing in over \$25,000 in annual royalties forty years after its publication. Groups from Glenn Miller to the University of Michigan Marching Band made the piece a staple of their performances over the decades.

RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Originally written in November 1944, "Russian Christmas Music" was first performed in December of that year at a special concert in Denver, Colorado, by a select group of musicians from five of the leading service bands stationed in that area. Two years later the music was revised and somewhat enlarged, and in that form was one of the three prize-winning works in the 1947 Columbia University contest for new serious music for symphonic band. First performances of this second version subsequently took place in 1948: the first by the Juilliard Band under Donald I. Moore, and the second by the Syracuse University Symphonic Band under Harwood Simmons, to whom the work was dedicated. Since then this music, although not previously published, has remained in the repertory of the concert band consistently and has established Alfred Reed as one of the most important writers for the contemporary band or wind ensemble.



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DREIDEL DANCE

Born in 1959, Robert Thurston served for 20 years on the arranging staff of The United States Air Force Band in Washington D.C. and was the band's chief arranger-composer from 2007 until his retirement in 2014. In that capacity he wrote for the Air Force Concert Band and Orchestra, the Singing Sergeants chorus, the Airmen of Note big band, the Air Force Strings, the Ceremonial Brass, and numerous chamber groups. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music education from Florida State University, and was inducted in 2014 to the FSU Bands Wall of Fame.

"Dreidel Dance" is a lighthearted theme-and-variations mashup of "The Dreidel Song" and "Hava Nagila," running both tunes through a stylistic funhouse and winding up in a flurry of high-speed energy. The piece is written without key signatures, but only because the frequency of the key changes and certain sections in heavily sharpened or flatted keys.

CHRISTMAS ON BROADWAY

John Higgins is a free-lance composer, arranger and producer for the educational divisions of Hal Leonard LLC. He began in the music field as the student arranger for the University of Michigan Band under Dr. William D. Revelli, and gained invaluable experience as a public school music teacher in suburban Chicago. John served as Illinois president of the American String Teachers Association, and his school concerts featured renowned soloists and conductors such as Skitch Henderson, Charlie Byrd, and Arthur Fiedler of the Boston Pops. John is best known for his many compositions and arrangements for choirs, bands and orchestras. As a composer of children's songs, he collaborated with such notables as John Jacobson, Roger Emerson and Emily Crocker on musicals. John has also arranged and produced a large catalog of children's music. John served as president of Jenson Publications before it became part of Hal Leonard LLC. In addition to his writing and producing activities, he maintains a role in music education as a guest conductor, clinician and author.

The stages of Broadway have provided many of our favorite holiday tunes. This arrangement contains a few of those gems, including "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas," "Pine Cones and Holly Berries," "Toyland," "March of the Toys," "My Favorite Things," "We Need A Little Christmas" and "God Bless Us Everyone."



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A CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

John Williams described Leroy Anderson as “one of the great American masters of light orchestral music.” Many of Anderson’s compositions were introduced by the Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Arthur Fiedler. Among these were “Jazz Pizzicato,” “The Syncopated Clock,” “The Typewriter,” “Bugler’s Holiday,” “Blue Tango,” and “A Trumpeter’s Lullaby.” One of his most familiar tunes, “Sleigh Ride,” was written during an August heat wave, not as a Christmas piece but rather a work describing a winter event.

In “A Christmas Festival,” Anderson applied his masterful scoring to a number of familiar Christmas melodies: “Joy to the World,” “Deck the Halls,” “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” “Good King Wenceslas,” “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” “Silent Night,” “Jingle Bells,” and “O Come All Ye Faithful.”