

 CSUSB Music Department Presents The

HOLIDAY GALA



SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

Showcasing the CSUSB Coyote Music Society, CSUSB Piano & Flute Ensembles, CSUSB Saxophone Ensemble, CSUSB Symphony Orchestra, CSUSB Alumni Maya Orendain, *flute*, Priscilla Ibarra, *violin*, Susan Felix, *violin*, Jammie Hampton, *soprano*, Denise Tillman, *soprano*, Daniel Ramon, *tenor*, & Keinan Hernandez, *baritone*, & Guest Artists Laura Griffin-Casey, *harp*, & David Cerna, *piano*

DEC. 3-4 ♦ ♦ ♦ 7PM ♦ PA 102



WELCOME



On behalf of the CSUSB Music Department it is our pleasure to welcome you to our annual Holiday Gala! This Gala is a tradition in our department that we look forward to sharing with our campus and greater Inland Empire communities, and we are delighted that you are here with us this evening.

This year's Holiday Gala theme is *Sounds of the Season*, and we hope you will enjoy feelings of warmth and nostalgia as we feature a spread of repertoire that includes classics such as the "Dance of the Reedflutes," "Chinese Dance," "Arab Dance," and "Trepak" from Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, an arrangement of the beloved Christmas Carol *Away in the Manger*, a fun arrangement of *Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer*, Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*, the nostalgic "Somewhere in My Memory" from the *Home Alone* score by John Williams, several orchestral holiday medleys, selections from *The Polar Express*, and more!

Our performance tonight is the beautiful culmination of several weeks of dedication, passion, and collaboration amongst our faculty, staff, and students, and we are delighted to be showcasing our CSUSB Piano & Flute Ensembles under the direction of Wen-Ting Huang, CSUSB Saxophone Ensemble under the direction of Edgar Melendez, and our CSUSB Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Lucy Lewis. Our featured soloists for the evening include CSUSB Alumni Maya Orendain, *flute*, Priscilla Ibarra, *violin*, Susan Felix, *violin*, Jammie Hampton, *soprano*, Denise Tillman, *soprano*, Daniel Ramon, *tenor*, & Keinan Hernandez, *baritone*, & Guest Artists Laura Griffin-Casey, *harp*, & David Cerna, *piano*.

After the performance, please join us for a light reception with sweet refreshments and hot drinks, we would love to visit with you.

But for now—please sit back, relax, enjoy, and thank you again for coming out to help us celebrate *Sounds of the Season*.

With holiday cheer and warmest wishes,

The Faculty, Staff & Students
CSUSB Department of Music



PROGRAM

~ Coyote Music Society Holiday Gala Welcome ~

~ CSUSB Piano & Flute Ensembles ~

Dr. Valentina Wen-Ting Huang, *director*

From *The Nutcracker Suite*.....Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

"Dance of the Reedflutes"

"Chinese Dance"

"Arab Dance"

Susan Addington, *flute 1*

Josue Verdejo, *flute 2*

Kevin Zhang*, *flute 3/clarinet*

Luis Alvarado, *piano*

Valentina W. Huang*, *piano*

(*faculty and guest performers)

From *The Nutcracker Suite*.....Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

"Trepak"

Luis Alvarado, Gabriel Cruz, Valentina W. Huang*, Brian Maize, Isa Martinez

Daniel Nuñez, Matthew Ortega, Harmony Reyes, Ian Mateo Rojas

~ Guest Artist ~

O Holy Night.....Adolphe Adam/Placide Cappeau
(1803-1856)/(1808-1877)

Arr. by Susann McDonald/Linda Wood Rollo

(1935-2025)/(b. 1945)

Laura Griffin-Casey, *harp*

Program Note >



~ Guest Artists ~

Away in a Manger.....William Kirkpatrick/James Murray
(1838-1921)/(1841-1905)

Arr. by John Wilson

Maya Orendain, *flute*

Priscilla Ibarra, *violin*

Susan Felix, *violin*

David Cerna, *piano*

PROGRAM

~ CSUSB Saxophone Ensemble ~

Dr. Edgar Melendez, *director*

Moonlit Village.....Chris E. Hass
(b. 1993)

Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer.....Randy Brooks
(b. 1949)

Arr. by Joseph Blackmon II

Raymond Yoo, *soprano saxophone*

Christian Torres, *alto saxophone*

Stephanie Giron-Gonzalez, *alto saxophone*

Oscar Muñoz, *tenor saxophone*

Andres Ramos, *tenor saxophone*

Jaden Garcia, *baritone saxophone*

INTERMISSION

~ CSUSB Symphony Orchestra ~

Dr. Lucy Lewis, *director*

Sleigh Ride.....Leroy Anderson
(1908-1975)

The Bells of Christmas.....Medley
Arr. by Bob Krogstad
(b. 1950)

"Ding Dong! Merrily on High!"

"The Bell Carol"

"Silver Bells"

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

"Jingle Bells"

Star of Wonder Medley.....Medley
Arr. by by Cliff Duren
(b. 1979)

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

"We Three Kings"

"How Great Our Joy"

Stille Nacht (Silent Night).....Franz Xaver Gruber
(1787-1863)

*Recorded by Mannheim Steamroller

Arr. by Chip Davis/Calvin Custer
(b. 1947)/(1939-1998)

Annabelle Su, *cello*

Monica Sanchez, *student conductor*

PROGRAM

This Christmas.....Donnie Hathaway
(1945-1979)

Denise Tillman, *soprano*

"Somewhere" from *Home Alone*.....John Williams
(b. 1932)

Selections from *The Polar Express*..... Alan Silvestri/Glen Ballard
(b. 1950)/(b. 1953)

"The Polar Express"

Arr. Audrey Snyder/Paul Murtha

"Hot Chocolate"

(b. 1953)/(b. 1960)

"Believe"

"Spirit of the Season"

Denise Tillman, *soprano*

Jammie Hampton, *soprano*

Daniel Ramon, *tenor*

Keinan Hernandez, *bass*

Our heartfelt gratitude to The Office of the President for their generous support of these Holiday Gala performances! Thank you so much for your support of the arts on our campus and in our community, you are a blessing to us!



~ CSUSB Symphony Orchestra ~

Dr. Lucy Lewis, *director*

1ST VIOLIN

Anna Caracosa, *concertmaster*

Edgar Villegas

Darla Rojas

Haocheng Yang~

2ND VIOLIN

Isabella Villa-Flores, *principal*

Alondra Hipolito-Moreno

Stephanie Rodriguez

Lilly Romo

VIOLA

Adam Arroyo, *principal*

Teran Hall~

CELLI

Annabelle Su, *principal*

Alberto Hernandez

Camila Vega-Espinoza~

DOUBLE BASS

James McConnell, *principal*

Anastasia Brubaker

Gabriel Cruz

Savannah Mendoza

Jeffrey Habell~

GUITAR

Anthony Noble, *principal*

Jason Villalobos

HARP

Laura Griffin-Casey~

KEYBOARD

David Cerna~, *principal*

CELESTA

Dr. Kevin Zhang^

FLUTE

Josue Verdejo, *principal*

Susan Addington

Maya Orendain#

PICCOLO

Susan Addington

OBOE

Dr. Jessica Getman^

Hannah Blok

ENGLISH HORN

Veronica Manzanera#

CLARINET

Wendi Shaffer, *principal*

Julian Berumen~

BASS CLARINET

Jordan Robles#

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Raymond Yoo, *principal*

Dr. Edgar Melendez^

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Jaden Garcia

BARITONE TROMBONE

Hugo Rivera

BASSOON

Paul Curtis~, *principal*

Dennis Robertson~

FRENCH HORN

Brian Hollett^, *principal*

AJ Moore

Joseph Marquez-Nieblas#

Alexa Velazco~

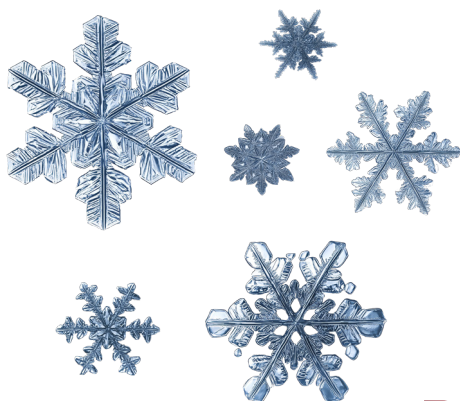
TRUMPET

Angel Castillo, *principal*

Zoe Slack

Shant Kalanjian~

^Faculty
#Alumni
-High School University Program
*Open University
~Community



TROMBONE
Grant Walker, *principal*

BASS TROMBONE
Angela Mejía#

TUBA
Jorge Treviño II#, *principal*

PERCUSSION
Jacob Shadle, *principal*
John Valenzuela
Cristobal Alcaraz
Jorge Sanchez
Jimmy Grissom

BIOS

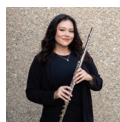


Dr. Valentina Wen-Ting Huang is a laureate of the Chesapeake Chamber Music Competition in the US and the National Young Talents Competition in Taiwan, and recipient of scholarship programs in Vienna, Paris, and the US. Dr. Huang weaves cultural richness and musical depth into every performance, presenting the classical music heritage with a modern, eclectic style. Her musical path includes the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts with Noel Flores, the École Normale de Musique de Paris with Germaine Mounier, and Indiana University, where she was mentored by the legendary pianist Menahem Pressler. The master classes with Alicia de Larrocha, Jörg Demus, Jacob Lateiner, Jean Micault, and Norman Shetler enriched her interpretative style, showcasing a unique synthesis of intellectual rigor, versatile expressivity, and emotional sensitivity. As a passionate educator devoted to nurturing the next generation of musicians, Dr. Huang directs the Keyboard Studies and Piano chamber ensembles at California State University, San Bernardino. She chairs the Inland Empire branch of Junior Chamber Music and serves as an adjunct faculty at Claremont Graduate University. She is a sought-after clinician and juror for MTAC, MTNA, SCJBF, SYMF, and international festivals. Recent highlights include the Steinway Top Teacher Award, a triumphant Taiwan tour with the Zephyra Trio, and a memorable performance of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the IVC Symphony Orchestra. She was invited to judge the final round of the 2025 Indonesian Steinway Youth Piano Competition in Jakarta. She served as the juror for the MTAC's Piano Concerto and Solo competition and Advanced Panel Adjudication in California. In summer 2025, she joined the piano faculty panel at the InterHarmony International Music Festival and the Talent Summer Courses Festival in Italy. She is slated to perform at the National Concert Hall in Taipei and the Opera Theatre in Taichung in December 2025. Her artistic journey is guided by a passion to discover, to connect, and to transform through music.



Laura Griffin-Casey received her Bachelor of Music degree in harp performance from the University of Southern California, studying with JoAnn Turovsky, and has attended master classes with Susann McDonald.

Laura has a strong background in orchestral, opera and popular performance including *The Light in the Piazza* with Coachella Valley Repertory in Cathedral City, *Phantom of the Opera* at the McCallum Theater in Palm Desert, *Christmas Is...* at Citrus College, *Elektra* with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera and concerts with the Redlands, San Bernardino and Riverside Symphonies. She also held the position of principal harpist with the Ventura County Symphony for five years. Other memorable experiences include performing with Frank Sinatra, Jr., recording with Melissa Manchester on her recent CD *The Fellas*, recording the harp passages for the film *Mr. Holland's Opus* with composer/conductor Michael Kamen, and performing in the premiere of Karel Husa's Cello Concerto with Lynn Harrell and the USC Symphony, Daniel Lewis conducting, in Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center. Laura was also a member of LA Harptette, a quartet of four harps, for many years.



Maya Orendain is a flutist and music educator based in Southern California. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Music Education (Pre-Certification) from California State University, San Bernardino. While at CSUSB, she was the winner of the 2023 CSUSB Concerto Competition and performed as a soloist with the university's Symphony Orchestra. In 2020, she toured internationally with the ensemble, performing at the renowned Seoul Arts Center in South Korea. Maya currently serves as Director of Bands at Pacific High School and maintains a private flute studio, inspiring young musicians to develop their skills and creativity through music.

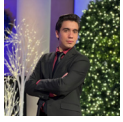


Priscilla Ibarra graduated from California State University, San Bernardino in May 2023 with a Bachelor of Music in Music Performance and a Bachelor of Art in Studio Art with a concentration in painting. In April 2025, she graduated with a Master of Music in Performance from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Redlands. During her undergraduate career, not only had she been commissioned for several artworks amongst faculty, but her art was exhibited in both the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art as well as having her own exhibition at the Garcia Center for the Arts. In 2019, she performed in South Korea at the IBK Chamber Hall of the Seoul Arts Center. In August 2025, she was a member of the Los Angeles Film Conducting Intensive, where she recorded an album alongside other musicians in the Clint Eastwood Stage at Warner Brothers. Currently, Priscilla plays in various mariachi groups, studying alongside the Mariachi Divas founded by Cindy Shea and continues working on her art commissions.



Susan Felix is a violinist and educator in the Inland Empire. She is the Orchestral Program director and Music Appreciation instructor at Pacific High School in San Bernardino, California. Having received her Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance degree, she is currently pursuing a Single Subject Credential at California State University, San Bernardino. After finishing the credentialing program, Ms. Felix plans to further her education by pursuing a Master of Arts in Education degree and a Master of Music in Instrumental Conducting degree. During her time at CSUSB, Ms. Felix served as a first violinist and concertmistress in the

Chamber Music and Collaborative Piano programs. Locally, Ms. Felix has performed with the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra as a guest student musician, has performed with the Claremont Symphony Orchestra, and participated in the west coast premiere of David Lang's *Crowd Out* which was performed at the world-renowned Walt Disney Concert Hall. Internationally, she had the opportunity to travel to Seoul, South Korea to perform with the CSUSB Symphony Orchestra in the world-renowned Seoul Arts Center IBK Chamber Hall in a sold-out concert.



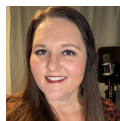
David Cerna is 21 years old and very passionate about music. Born into a very musically gifted family, his love for music began at an early age. He has been studying piano since he was seven. Most of his early instruction was given by his grandmother, a retired concert pianist. During high school, he received formal piano instruction at the Colburn School of Performing Arts in the city of Los Angeles, where he earned a full scholarship for his outstanding musicianship and performed on numerous occasions. One of his most notable achievements during high school was the opportunity to perform a piano concerto with the La Mirada Symphony Orchestra as a prize for winning first place in a concerto competition. David is currently in his senior year at the USC Thornton School of Music where he is working towards his bachelor's in piano performance with Professor Daniel Pollack and taking his pianistic and musical ability to the next level. He has also become heavily involved in the Choral and Sacred Music Department, seeking to pursue a master's in that department in Fall 2026. In these last four years, he has had many performance opportunities, has collaborated with many renowned artists, and has further cultivated his musicianship.



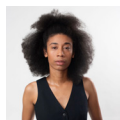
Dr. Edgar Melendez is a professional freelance saxophonist based in the Los Angeles/ Inland Empire areas. He currently serves as the adjunct professor of saxophone and sax ensemble director at CSU San Bernardino. He has performed with the Pacific Symphony, Fresno Philharmonic, Santa Barbara and Redlands Symphony among other reputable collegiate organizations; like the University of Southern California Wind Ensemble and the University of California Los Angeles Philharmonia. His saxophone quartet, Kintsugi quartet, is an award-winning quartet, where he performs as the soprano saxophone chair. Melendez holds a DMA degree from the University of Southern California in Performance with an emphasis in music education, theory pedagogy and jazz studies.



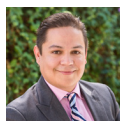
A senior at CSUSB, **Monica Sanchez** is a doubler major in the Bachelor of Music, Conducting performance and Music Education programs. She has worked with nationally recognized film composer and conductor, David Newman, new music specialist and opera singer, Stacey Fraser, and conductor and singer, Lesley Leighton. Sanchez performed in the CSUSB Opera Theatre production of *Opera in Song* in Fall 2023, where she had both solo and trio movements. Most notably, she sang with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for its live-to-screen performances of *Home Alone* in December 2023 and 2024. She made her conducting debut in CSUSB Chamber Singers' concert, *Peace & Love* in Spring 2024. A native of Baldwin Park, California, she holds an A.A. in Music from Mt. San Antonio College.



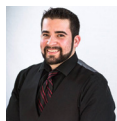
Jammie Hampton is a multifaceted creative and entrepreneur based in Rialto, California. She has been a Private Voice and Piano Teacher at her own studio since 1994, helping students of all ages build confidence, strengthen technique, and discover their artistic potential. In addition to her private studio, Jammie is the Director at St. Lucy's Priory High School in Glendora, California, where she directed *Schoolhouse Rock Live, Jr.* premiering in May 2025. Jammie is also the creator of a fully self-produced Online Singing Course (released in 2024 and available at jammiehampton.podia.com), extending her passion for vocal education to students worldwide. Since 2015, she has performed professionally as a Caroler with The Other Reindeer Carolers, bringing festive music to Scrooling and Christmas events each holiday season. Her stage experience includes a wide variety of roles across musical theatre, such as: *A Christmas Story* (Ensemble), *Guys and Dolls* (Sarah), *Into the Woods* (Cinderella), *Anything Goes* (Hope Harcourt), *Once on This Island* (Asaka, Mother of the Earth), *The Threepenny Opera* (Polly Peachum), and *Once Upon a Mattress* (Lady Larkin). Jammie's teaching expertise has led to multiple guest coaching opportunities, that include serving as a guest vocal coach for Bellflower High School (Oct. 2025), Cypress College (2025), and Word of Truth Christian Center, San Bernardino (Oct.-Dec. 2024 & Nov. 2025). In addition to her musical and educational work, Jammie is also an entrepreneur and owner of Groove and Shine Cleaners, a small cleaning business serving the Inland Empire with reliable, high-quality residential and Airbnb cleaning services. Jammie lives in Rialto with her soul mate, Bradley and together they have five children, including two angel babies. She thanks them for their support and love in all her endeavors and above all thanks God for her talents. @jammiehampton



Denise Tillman is a CSUSB Music Department alumni. Ms. Tillman has recently shared the stage with the LA Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Gustavo Dudamel at Coachella, and performed at the Walt Disney Hall for the Eldorado Ballroom curated by Solange Knowles for Saint Heron. Denise has been featured in commercials for Vh1 and Honda, and has performed on Royal Caribbean cruise ships and at Disneyland for their Festival of Holidays. She is happy to be back singing with the CSUSB Orchestra this year.



Professor Daniel Ramon is a tenor performer based in Los Angeles. His love of music has brought him opportunities performing locally in venues such as the Hollywood Bowl, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Segerstrom Concert Hall and more. Professor Ramon is a classically trained tenor with a Bachelor of Music from CSU San Bernardino, and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Bob Cole Conservatory of music in CSU Long Beach. Professor Ramon also sings in concerts and operas around Los Angeles. He is in professional groups such as Los Angeles Master Chorale and Pacific Chorale. He is pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in Historical Practices at Claremont Graduate University. He is a proud alumnus of CSUSB where he is also a voice faculty as well; teaching voice class, applied voice, and queer music studies. This January, he will be featured as *Tamino* in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (Magic Flute) with the Southland Symphony Orchestra, in Ontario, CA.



Keinan Hernandez, CSUSB alumni, graduated with a BA degree in Music Education. Keinan is well versed in a variety of vocal projects ranging from the 2015 E3 conference opening ceremony in Los Angeles to opera premieres in various Southern California cities. He has appeared in many CSUSB operas including a Tarantino inspired variation of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, and the west coast premiere of Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Monkey See, Monkey Do*, a children's opera. He is also currently an active member of the vocal group Vox Obscura based in Irvine, CA, specializing in early renaissance music from around the world. Mr. Hernandez is regularly a guest artist with the CSUSB Performing Arts department and always delighted to get the chance to share his passion for vocal music with the community.



Dr. Lucy Lewis currently serves as the Music Director and Conductor of the Orchestral Studies Program at California State University, San Bernardino. She is a dedicated interdisciplinary collaborator, and her innovative season programming has featured the CSUSB Opera Theatre Program, Concert Choir & Chamber Singers, and Vocal Jazz Program, in addition to multiple guest artists. An avid supporter of the development of young musicians, Dr. Lewis founded the CSUSB Young Artist Competition and annually commissions new works by the faculty and students of the CSUSB Composition Program. Dr. Lewis is frequently engaged as an orchestral clinician and has guest conducted orchestras in California, Michigan, Tennessee, Maine, and Florida. In the fall of 2019, Dr. Lewis led the CSUSB Orchestra on an international tour to South Korea where they performed in the Seoul Center for the Arts IBK Chamber Hall. An active soloist, chamber, and orchestral musician, Dr. Lewis has performed in the United States, Canada, South America, Europe, and Africa. Dr. Lewis holds a cognate in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Iowa, she is the Concertmaster of the Coachella Valley Symphony Orchestra, she serves on the board of, and subs with, the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra, and also subs with the Redlands Symphony Orchestra.

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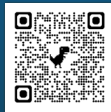
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Leroy Anderson, *Sleigh Ride*

Sleigh Ride by Leroy Anderson is one of the most widely recognized and beloved showpieces of Christmas holiday music. *Sleigh Ride* premiered in 1948 with the Boston Pops Symphony, and to this day, it remains as one of the most-performed holiday pieces in the U.S., with thousands of recordings to its name. The piece's vivid soundscape paints a picture of reindeer trotting through snowy slopes, setting the mood for a perfectly wintery Christmas. What is even more amusing than the imagery provided by the music is the ironic story of how the piece came to be. Anderson initially wrote the piece during a heatwave in July of 1946. He did not intend the piece to be a Christmas song so much as a chilled memory of a winter long ago. The lyrical content never mentions Christmas, but still beckons for an afternoon filled with holiday festivities.

The instrumental introduction to the piece mimics the sound of snow whirling around through the strings and woodwinds, and the sound of sleigh bells. The familiar melody is performed by the singers, violins, flutes, and oboes. The winter scene is largely created with the help of special effects featured within the percussion section and include temple blocks to mimic the sound of hooves, and a slap stick to emulate the crack of a whip. As the piece progresses, you'll notice this slap stick upgrades in size to feature an 8-foot tall slapstick built by the students themselves! The piece ends with a lively whinny let out by the trumpet, and ends in a punctuated manner across the whole orchestra.

Medley, *The Bells of Christmas* (Arr. Bob Krogstad)

Bob Krogstad's orchestra medley brings together five bell-ringing favorites into a warm holiday showcase. What makes the piece so much more special is that it combines modern holiday themes with traditional pieces, creating a warm display of multiple cultures for the winter season.

The piece opens with "Ding Dong! Merrily on High" which originates from the Renaissance period. It is a theme adapted from a 16th-century French dance titled *Branle de L'Official*, and was later translated to English texts by George Ratcliffe Woodward in the 1900's. The following piece is none other than "Carol of the Bells" which was written in 1916 by a Ukrainian composer by the name of Mykola Dmytovych Leontovych. It was meant to be performed by students for a Christmas concert in Kiev, inspired by the Ukrainian folktale stating that all the bells in existence rang to announce the birth of Christ. "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" shares a similarly celebratory experience and is an uplifting carol set to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem entitled "Christmas Bells." The piece tells of the poet's despair hearing the ring of Christmas bells amidst the American Civil War, but uplifts the spirits, declaring "For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!" Although the following piece captures the sound of Christmas in the city, Ray Evans and Jay Livingston originally intended for "Silver Bells" to be a Thanksgiving staple! Nonetheless, it joins everyone's favorite song "Jingle Bells" in a final celebration of the Christmas season!

Medley, *Star of Wonder Medley* (Arr. Cliff Duren)

Cliff Duren's *Star of Wonder Medley* explores the idea of using modern musical styles in a classical setting. With rock-influenced rhythm and electric guitar features layered over the traditional orchestral sound, this piece will surely catch the ears of any audience. This overture combines "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "We Three Kings," and "How Great Our Joy."

Throughout this piece, you will hear all three carols intertwined. First, the brass section outlines "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," which is a traditional 15th-century English carol. It is one of the oldest carols in history, and yet this piece finds a way to reimagine it in a way you've never heard before. Next, the piano and oboes enter with "We Three Kings," which was originally written in 1857 by John Henry Hopkins Jr. It tells the story of the journey of the three Magi while they followed the Star of Bethlehem. Then, the guitar, piano, and violins continue on with "How Great Our Joy," a German carol that exudes radiant joy. Finally, all three pieces intertwine and overlap to create a beautifully textured work from start to finish.

Donnie Hathaway, *This Christmas*

Donnie Hathaway's hit holiday single *This Christmas* was recorded in the fall of 1970 in Chicago. He wrote the piece alongside Nadine McKinnor to create a holiday song that placed Black celebration at the center of the season, envisioning anticipation and warmth. Hathaway shaped the song further by applying a jazzy groove and a radiant harmonic texture, gifting a track that has become a staple in many Black households for Christmas festivities. The song has charted within the *Billboard* Hot 100 songs since December of 2020 and is frequently rearranged for choir and orchestra.

In this arrangement of *This Christmas*, the piece has been adapted to a warmer and more jubilant key than what it was originally written in. Horns and trumpets are used to brighten each refrain with a gospel-like shimmer, while the bass line, sleigh bells, and hand-percussion instruments keep the beat moving. Strings are used to create flourishes of sound leading from one refrain to the next, creating a thick swirling texture that makes the piece feel more round. A celebratory vamp at the end invites the ensemble and the audience at the end to join in on the joyful activities!

Franz Xaver Gruber, *Stille Nacht (Silent Night)* (Arr. by Chip Davis & Calvin Custer)

Silent Night is a popular Christmas carol that was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber and set to lyrics written by Joseph Mohr. The piece has circled the globe and received the honor of being placed on Austria's National UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, canonizing its value as a symbol of hope and peace across national borders. Chip Davis and Calvin Custer have beautifully adapted this piece to include their signature neo-classical style, never neglecting glowing harmonies and serene pulse throughout.

The piece is introduced by a cello solo featuring principal cellist, Annabelle Su. In this solo you may enjoy singing melodies over a beautiful piano accompaniment; The texture that the accompaniment provides is another signature of the Mannheim Steamroller's original sound. The result of this combination results in a gentle lullaby reimagined for a symphonic configuration.

John Williams, "Somewhere in My Memory" from *Home Alone*

Home Alone is widely regarded as one of the best Christmas movies of all time, not just because of its comedic value, but also because of its music. "Somewhere in My Memory" is one of the most iconic and well-known melodies from John Williams' soundtrack. Its soft, lullaby-like writing is reminiscent of childhood Christmases of years past.

The orchestra begins with the melody first, starting with the woodwinds, and then passing the melody to the french horns, which is one of the defining characteristics of John Williams' writing. The melody is then passed along to the choir, with lyrics that reminisce about the nostalgia of Christmas joy that stays in your memories. During the instrumental interlude, Williams circles back to his signature french horn and low brass timbre to add that special texture that he's known for. The orchestra and choir finish out the piece together, singing the main first lines of the melody together as a reminder of the warmth and joy of the music and magic of Christmas.

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Based on a children's book written by Chris Van Allsburg, *The Polar Express* tells the story of a young boy that boards a mysterious midnight train bound for the North Pole. *The Polar Express* beautifully captures youthful innocence and reminds us all to not give up on childlike wonder, believe in friendship, and to have courage when faced with the unknown. Alan Silvestri and Glen Ballard's score for the 2004 film earned a Grammy award and Oscar and Golden Globe nominations, highlighting its significance both as a story full of powerful themes and a family holiday staple.

Arrangers Audrey Snyder and Paul Murtha specially selected a few pieces from the film's soundtrack to kick us straight into high gear with the signature locomotive title theme, "*The Polar Express*." The train whistle heard from behind the orchestra invites everyone aboard for a round trip ride! Strings, low winds, and percussion operate as a machine to deliver rhythms that mimic the chugging of wheels on a rail. The double basses walk us right on over to the next theme, "*Hot Chocolate!*" where the only rule is to "never-ever let it cool!" The orchestra and singers delight in such an exciting theme, you may even catch some of them spinning their instruments to display their enthusiasm! The tempo comes to a gentle lull still warmed by hot drinks, strings, and harp to support the tender vocal lines in the song "*Believe*." As the train approaches its destination, a winter shimmer is sprinkled in by the glockenspiel, triangle, and

sleigh bells. “*Spirit of the Season*” serves as a roof-raising finale and reminds us as the Christmas season approaches its end, the bell will still ring for all those who truly believe.

PROGRAM NOTES

Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker Suite*

Tonight we open our program with excerpts from one of the most enjoyed pieces of music during the Christmas holiday season—Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Suite from *The Nutcracker*. This orchestral suite was derived from the original setting of the ballet, which premiered on December 6, 1892, at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. The inspiration for this ballet came from Alexander Dumas' short story, *The Nutcracker* (1844), which is a re-telling of E.T.A. Hoffman's short story *The Nutcracker and The Mouse King* (1816). These stories feature a child's imagination of their Nutcracker coming to life on Christmas Eve, at the foot of their Christmas tree. In Act II of the original ballet, there are a variety of characters, and dancers from different countries that are featured in individual scenes of the ballet, all in the "Land of Sweets". This evening, our piano and flute ensemble will be performing arrangements of four of these scenes: 1) "Dance of the Reedflutes" (representing Marzipan), 2) "Arab Dance" (representing coffee), 3) "Chinese Dance" (representing tea), and 4) "Trepak" (Russian dancers representing candy canes). Enjoy!

Adolphe Adam/Placide Cappeau, *O Holy Night* (Arr. by Susann McDonald/Linda Wood Rollo)

In 1847 a priest in the small town of Roquemaure, France, sought out local poet Placide Cappeau to write a poem for the town's Christmas mass. Interestingly, Cappeau was a professed atheist, but he accepted the priest's request, and wrote a poem entitled *Cantique de Noel*. Cappeau was pleased with his poem, and subsequently invited his Jewish friend Adolphe Adam to set it to music. Even though Adam did not celebrate the birth of Christ, he also accepted this offer, and composed the beautiful melody for what we now know today as *O Holy Night*. Due to the non-Christian origins of both the poet and composer, the church in France tried to ban the piece for a couple of decades, but it was still widely sung, and has subsequently increased in popularity, and been arranged for a variety of settings. Tonight, we invite you to follow along with the lyrics as you enjoy this beautiful setting of *O Holy Night* for harp:

Verse 1

*O Holy night!
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the Angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O Holy night, O night divine!*

Verse 2

*Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend*

*He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend*

Verse 3

*Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name, all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim*

William Kirkpatrick/James Murray, *Away in a Manger* (Arr. by John Wilson)

Away in a Manger is a treasured Christmas carol that's gentle musical setting and lyrics have established it as a key feature for any musical story-telling of the Nativity. The exact authorship of the text of this carol is unknown, but we can trace settings of the music back to American composers James Murray (1887) and William Kirkpatrick (1895). Tonight's beautiful arrangement of this carol is for three treble instruments (in our case a flute and two violins), and piano accompaniment. Feel free to follow along with the lyrics as you enjoy this instrumental arrangement of this beloved Christmas carol:

Verse 1

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

Verse 2

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

Verse 3

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with thee there.*

Chris E. Hass, *Moonlit Village* (*Program note written by composer)

Moonlit Village is a continuation of the video game-inspired saga I started a year prior with my composition 'Final Boss'. I was overwhelmed with the support I received for that initial project that, in true video game fashion, *Moonlit Village* became a "hidden collectable" for having more saxophonists join the commissioning consortium than I expected. *Moonlit Village* acts as a relaxing town theme, a respite from the more difficult challenges of the player's journey. The music takes inspiration from cozy games like *Stardew Valley*, *Animal Crossing*, and *A Short Hike*, where comfort and community are prioritized over combat or timing-based maneuvers. Musically, the composition

employs lyrical and memorable melodies with just enough harmonic spice to keep things interesting and add a bittersweet and nostalgic ambience to the sound.

Randy Brooks, *Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer* (Arr. by Joseph Blackmon II)

Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer is a hilarious, lighthearted Christmas song that has, over time, become a hit with audiences due to the absurd humor of its lyrics. According to composer Randy Brooks, his inspiration for writing this song was "a tipsy relative of his," likely his uncle Foster Brooks, a comedian known for acting a drunk in his shows. Brooks' own band did not want to record the song, and so Brooks offered it to the duo *Elmo and Patsy*, after he joined them for a show at the Hyatt Lake Tahoe in December of 1978. They went on to record the song, and over the years, it has been covered by many artists, and adapted into several different arrangements. This evening's performance is an instrumental arrangement by Joseph Blackmon II for saxophone ensemble, and we invite you to follow along with the lyrics as they play:

[Chorus]

*Grandma got run over by a reindeer
Walking home from our house Christmas Eve
You can say there's no such thing as Santa
But as for me and Grandpa, we believe*

[Verse 1]

*She'd been drinkin' too much eggnog
And we'd begged her not to go

But she forgot her medication
And she staggered out the door into the snow

When we found her Christmas mornin'
At the scene of the attack

She had hoof prints on her forehead
And incriminating Claus marks on her back*

[Chorus]

*Grandma got run over by a reindeer
Walking home from our house Christmas Eve

You can say there's no such thing as Santa
But as for me and Grandpa, we believe*

[Verse 2]

*Now we're all so proud of Grandpa
He's been takin' this so well
See him in there watchin' football
Drinkin beer and playin' cards with cousin Mel

It's not Christmas without Grandma
All the family's dressed in black*

*And we just can't help but wonder:
Should we open up her gifts or send them back?
(Send them back!)*

Leroy Anderson, *Sleigh Ride*

Sleigh Ride by Leroy Anderson is one of the most widely recognized and beloved showpieces of Christmas holiday music. *Sleigh Ride* premiered in 1948 with the Boston Pops Symphony, and to this day, it remains as one of the most-performed holiday pieces in the U.S., with thousands of recordings to its name. The piece's vivid soundscape paints a picture of reindeer trotting through snowy slopes, setting the mood for a perfectly wintery Christmas. What is even more amusing than the imagery provided by the music is the ironic story of how the piece came to be. Anderson initially wrote the piece during a heatwave in July of 1946. He did not intend the piece to be a Christmas song so much as a chilled memory of a winter long ago. The lyrical content never mentions Christmas, but still beckons for an afternoon filled with holiday festivities. The instrumental introduction to the piece mimics the sound of snow whirling around through the strings and woodwinds, and the sound of sleigh bells. The familiar melody is performed by the singers, violins, flutes, and oboes. The winter scene is largely created with the help of special effects featured within the percussion section and include temple blocks to mimic the sound of hooves, and a slap stick to emulate the crack of a whip. As the piece progresses, you'll notice this slap stick upgrades in size to feature an 8-foot tall slapstick built by the students themselves! The piece ends with a lively whinny let out by the trumpet, and ends in a punctuated manner across the whole orchestra.

Medley, *The Bells of Christmas* (Arr. Bob Krogstad)

Bob Krogstad's orchestra medley brings together five bell-ringing favorites into a warm holiday showcase. What makes the piece so much more special is that it combines modern holiday themes with traditional pieces, creating a warm display of multiple cultures for the winter season. The piece opens with "Ding Dong! Merrily on High" which originates from the Renaissance period. It is a theme adapted from a 16th-century French dance titled *Branle de L'Official*, and was later translated to English texts by George Ratcliffe Woodward in the 1900's. The following piece is none other than "Carol of the Bells" which was written in 1916 by a Ukrainian composer by the name of Mykola Dmytovych Leontovych. It was meant to be performed by students for a Christmas concert in Kiev, inspired by the Ukrainian folktale stating that all the bells in existence rang to announce the birth of Christ. "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" shares a similarly celebratory experience and is an uplifting carol set to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem entitled "Christmas Bells." The piece tells of the poet's despair hearing the ring of Christmas bells amidst the American Civil War, but uplifts the spirits, declaring "For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!" Although the following piece captures the sound of Christmas in the city, Ray Evans and Jay Livingston originally intended for "Silver Bells" to be a Thanksgiving staple! Nonetheless, it joins everyone's favorite song "Jingle Bells" in a final celebration of the Christmas season!

Medley, *Star of Wonder Medley* (Arr. Cliff Duren)

Cliff Duren's *Star of Wonder Medley* explores the idea of using modern musical styles in a classical setting. With rock-influenced rhythm and electric guitar features layered over the traditional orchestral sound, this piece will surely catch the ears of any audience. This overture combines "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "We Three Kings," and "How Great Our Joy." Throughout this piece, you will hear all three carols intertwined. First, the brass section outlines "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," which is a traditional 15th-century English carol. It is one of the oldest carols in history, and yet this piece finds a way to reimagine it in a way you've never heard before. Next, the piano and oboes enter with "We Three Kings," which was originally written in 1857 by John Henry

Hopkins Jr. It tells the story of the journey of the three Magi while they followed the Star of Bethlehem. Then, the guitar, piano, and violins continue on with “How Great Our Joy,” a German carol that exudes radiant joy. Finally, all three pieces intertwine and overlap to create a beautifully textured work from start to finish.

Donnie Hathaway, *This Christmas*

Donnie Hathaway’s hit holiday single *This Christmas* was recorded in the fall of 1970 in Chicago. He wrote the piece alongside Nadine McKinnor to create a holiday song that placed Black celebration at the center of the season, envisioning anticipation and warmth. Hathaway shaped the song further by applying a jazzy groove and a radiant harmonic texture, gifting a track that has become a staple in many Black households for Christmas festivities. The song has charted within the *Billboard* Hot 100 songs since December of 2020 and is frequently rearranged for choir and orchestra. In this arrangement of *This Christmas*, the piece has been adapted to a warmer and more jubilant key than what it was originally written in. Horns and trumpets are used to brighten each refrain with a gospel-like shimmer, while the bass line, sleigh bells, and hand-percussion instruments keep the beat moving. Strings are used to create flourishes of sound leading from one refrain to the next, creating a thick swirling texture that makes the piece feel more round. A celebratory vamp at the end invites the ensemble and the audience at the end to join in on the joyful activities!

Franz Xaver Gruber, *Stille Nacht (Silent Night)* (Arr. by Chip Davis & Calvin Custer)

Silent Night is a popular Christmas carol that was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber and set to lyrics written by Joseph Mohr. The piece has circled the globe and received the honor of being placed on Austria’s National UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, canonizing its value as a symbol of hope and peace across national borders. Chip Davis and Calvin Custer have beautifully adapted this piece to include their signature neo-classical style, never neglecting glowing harmonies and serene pulse throughout. The piece is introduced by a cello solo featuring principal cellist, Annabelle Su. In this solo you may enjoy singing melodies over a beautiful piano accompaniment; The texture that the accompaniment provides is another signature of the Mannheim Steamroller’s original sound. The result of this combination results in a gentle lullaby reimagined for a symphonic configuration.

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