

**December 16 and 17, 2022**

**7:30 pm**

**“An American Christmas”**

**La Crosse Symphony Orchestra**

**In collaboration with LYSO  
La Crosse Area Youth Symphony Orchestra - Randy Mastin, Director**

**Matt Curtis of Coulee Classic, a Barbershop Quartet**

**LEROY ANDERSON: *Sleigh Ride*  
(1908 – 1975)**

**VICTOR HERBERT: “March of the Toys” from *Babes in Toyland*  
(1859 – 1924)**

**SAMUEL BARBER: “Stille Nacht” from *Die Natali, Op. 37, Chorale Preludes for Christmas*  
(1910 - 1981)**

**LUCAS RICHMAN: *Hanukkah Festival Overture*  
(b. 1964)**

***Holiday Favorites for Barbershop Quartet, with Coulee Classic***

***The Nutcracker Suite* - Original by P. I. Tchaikovsky, Orchestration by Jeff Tyzik  
Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn  
Duke Ellington: (1899 - 1974); Billy Strayhorn: (1915 – 1967)**

**INTERMISSION**

***With Members of the La Crosse Area Youth Symphony Orchestra***

**PIETR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY: Suite from *Swan Lake*  
(1840 - 1893)**

***Joined by Coulee Classic***

**REDNER, arr. ROBERTSON: Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem  
Louis H. Redner (1831 – 1908)**

**JOHN WILLIAMS: “Somewhere in My Memory,” from *Home Alone*  
(b. 1932)**

**JOHN FINNEGAN: Audience Christmas Sing-Along including “Rock of Ages”  
(1926 - 2007)**

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**Sleigh Ride**

***Leroy Anderson (b. Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 29, 1908; d. Woodbury, Connecticut, May 18, 1975)***

Leroy Anderson was an American composer of short, light concert pieces, many of which were introduced by the Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Arthur Fiedler – including this work. The American film composer John Williams described Anderson as "one of the great American masters of light orchestral music." Anderson studied piano at the New England Conservatory, and in 1925 he entered Harvard University, where he studied musical harmony with Professor Walter Piston, an American composer who taught many well-known composers and conductors including Leonard Bernstein and Samuel Adler. At Harvard University Graduate School, Anderson continued studying with Piston and with Romanian violinist and composer Georges Enescu, earning a Master of Arts in Music degree in 1930.

*Sleigh Ride* is a popular light holiday orchestral piece. Anderson finished the composition in February 1948. An instrumental work, it was first recorded in 1949 by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra and issued on a red vinyl record. Over the years, the work has become a Christmas standard. And, by the way, musicians really enjoy performing this piece!!

**March of the Toys from *Babes in Toyland***

***Victor Herbert (b. Dublin, Ireland, February 1, 1859; d. New York City, New York, May 26, 1924)***

Victor August Herbert was an American composer, cellist and conductor who grew up in Germany. Although Herbert was a fine cellist and conductor, he is best known for composing many successful operettas that premiered on Broadway from the 1890s to World War I. Incidentally, he was a founder of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).

In the early 1880s, Herbert began a career as a cellist in Vienna and Stuttgart. Herbert and his opera singer wife, Therese Förster, moved to the U.S. in 1886 when both were hired by the Metropolitan Opera. Herbert served as principal cellist in the pit orchestra as his wife sang on stage. Herbert also taught at the National Conservatory of Music where Anton Dvořák was his colleague.

Herbert began to compose operettas in 1894, producing several successes, including *The Serenade* (1897) and *The Fortune Teller* (1898). *Babes in Toyland* (1903) was his first major hit. Interestingly, some of these operettas have been performed at the high school level.

In Vienna and Stuttgart, he initially studied the piano, flute and piccolo but ultimately settled on the cello while attending the Stuttgart Conservatory. Herbert was engaged professionally as a musician in concerts in Stuttgart. His first orchestra position was as a flute and piccolo player (no wonder his flute/piccolo parts in *Babes in Toyland* are so well written and even featured in preparatory school band programs!).

### ***Stille Nacht from Die Natali, Op. 37; Chorale Preludes for Christmas***

**Samuel Barber (b. West Chester, Pennsylvania, March 9, 1910; d. New York City, New York, January 23, 1981**

*Stille Nacht* is a popular Christmas carol, composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in a small town near Salzburg, Austria. The song was declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2011 and has been recorded and arranged for every music genre. Samuel Barber bringing a strong vocal background as well as composing talent to this work, his *Christmas Choral Prelude* arrangement of “*Stille Nacht*” is most beautiful. It was excerpted from Barber’s *Die Natalie, Op. 37*.

Silent night, holy night  
All is calm, and all is bright  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child  
Holy infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace

Samuel Barber was a 20<sup>th</sup> century American composer, pianist, conductor, and music educator. For a while, he had a brief career as a professional baritone, which inspired a lifelong love of composing vocal music. Interestingly, two-thirds of his compositional output was dedicated to writing art songs for voice and piano, choral music, and songs for voice and orchestra.

Principally influenced by nine years of composition studies with Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute and more than twenty-five years of study with his uncle, the composer Sidney Homer, Barber's music usually embraced lyricism and emotional expression. He became skilled at writing and arranging both instrumental and vocal music.

His aunt, Louise Homer, was a leading contralto at the Metropolitan Opera; his uncle, Sidney Homer, was a composer of American art songs. Not surprisingly, contralto Louise Homer is known to have influenced Barber's interest in voice. Composer Sidney Homer mentored Barber for more than 25 years, and profoundly influenced his compositional aesthetics.

Barber was awarded the Edward MacDowell Medal in 1980 by the MacDowell Colony for outstanding contribution to the arts. We heard a piano by MacDowell at these concerts last month.

## **Hanukkah Festival Overture**

**Lucas Richman (b. January 31, 1964)**

*Hanukkah Festival Overture*, composed by Lucas Richman, is a piece based on the traditional tunes that mark the celebration of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights. The festival is observed by lighting one candle each day on a nine-branch candelabrum, called a menorah. One branch is typically placed above or below the others and its candle is used to light the other eight candles. Hanukkah is celebrated with a series of rituals that are performed every day throughout the eight-day holiday. This year, 2022, Hanukkah begins the evening of Sunday, December 18, and ends sundown on Monday, December 26.

The overture incorporates six specific tunes that speak either of the miracle of the oil that burned seven days longer than expected or that illustrate the manner in which the holiday is celebrated today. The Pacific Symphony Orchestra commissioned this work in 1994. On his website, ([lucasrichman.com](http://lucasrichman.com)), Richman describes the work: “A rousing piece based on the traditional tunes that mark the celebration of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. This work has been performed by over 300 orchestras since 1994.”

## ***Holiday Favorites for Barbershop Quartet, with Coulee Classic***

### ***The Nutcracker Suite***

**Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn**

**Duke Ellington: (b. Washington, D. C., April 29, 1899; d. New York City, New York, May 24, 1974)**

**Billy Strayhorn (William Thomas Strayhorn): (b. Dayton, Ohio, November 29, 1915; d. New York City, New York, May 31, 1967)**

***Original by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and freely arranged by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn; arranged and adapted by Jeff Tyzik***

It’s been said that Duke and Strayhorn's interpretation, orchestration, and reimagining of Tchaikovsky's score is brilliant. The phrasing, the pulses, the layered, syncopated horn lines, and the liberties taken with tempo and feel are stunning.

The website [WiseMusicClassical.com](http://WiseMusicClassical.com) reads, “In 1960 Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn reinvented Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's holiday ballet classic, *The Nutcracker Suite*, as a jazzy, brassy melting pot of musical styles past and present.”

“There is such a range in dynamics throughout the work, that it allows the audience to explore an equally exciting range of material, from dense subdivisions and fast-paced vocabulary to rhythmically simple/open material, both with a stylistic nuance inspired by the textures and tones of the chosen instruments throughout!”

### ***Duke Ellington***

Born April 29, 1899, in Washington D. C., composer, bandleader, and pianist Edward Kennedy ("Duke") Ellington was recognized in his lifetime as one of the greatest jazz composers and performers. A genius for instrumental combinations, improvisation, and jazz arranging brought the world the unique "Ellington" sound that found consummate expression in works like *Mood Indigo*, *Sophisticated Lady*, and the symphonic suite, *Harlem*.

Beginning keyboard studies at the age of seven, Ellington's earliest influences were the ragtime pianists. He taught himself harmony at the piano, and at age 17 made his professional debut. Encouraged by Fats Waller, he moved to New York in 1923 and, during the formative Cotton Club years, experimented with and developed the style that would quickly bring him worldwide success and recognition. Ellington would be among the first to focus on musical form and composition in jazz. In this respect, he would influence the likes of Monk, Mingus, and Evans.

### ***Billy Strayhorn***

Born in Dayton, Ohio, on November 29, 1915, the young composer and pianist Billy Strayhorn offered his composition *Lush Life* to Duke Ellington in 1938. Less than a year later Strayhorn had become an arranger and pianist with the Ellington band, a collaboration that was to last until Strayhorn's death in 1967. His classical and jazz training, combined with sophisticated taste, was appreciated by Ellington, who described him as "my listener, my most dependable appraiser [and] critic."

After an "audition," Ellington told Strayhorn that he wanted him to come to New York and work in his organization. Ellington handed Billy a twenty-dollar bill for his "audition orchestration" and a slip of paper explaining how to take the subway from Pennsylvania Station to Duke's apartment in Harlem.

Among the works that Strayhorn composed alone or with Ellington are the classics *Take the A Train*, *Chelsea Bridge*, *Passionflower*, and *Johnny Come Lately*.

## **INTERMISSION**

***With Members of the La Crosse Area Youth Symphony Orchestra (LYSO)***  
**Randy Mastin, Director**

### ***Suite from Swan Lake***

***Pieter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (b. Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840; d. St. Petersburg, Russia, November 6, 1893)***

Three topics are essential to an understanding of Tchaikovsky's ballets – 1) the ballet audience and 2) the collaboration of the ballet master and the composer. The ballet master is essentially the director of the dancers. The third topic is an understanding of how the music was written to support the school of dance in a collaborative manner.

As a ballet composer, Tchaikovsky had to not only consider the listener but also to work together with the ballet master – essentially the director of the dancers. As a ballet composer, he had to be sensitive to keeping aural attractions of concert music from detracting from the choreography. In *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, author Ronald John Wiley writes, "the first requirement of the specialist composer was to

acknowledge the importance of the visual component in ballet. The composer-ballet master collaboration set out to achieve a unity of sound and gesture.”

Tchaikovsky commented that during the production of a new ballet, “ballet masters treat the music very unceremoniously and demand many changes and alterations.” Wiley writes, “The quality most often cited is melodiousness, not simply in the sense of memorable tunes, but as a function of accompaniment to the dance.”

In this sense, the music of *Swan Lake* stands beautifully by itself.

Skill in orchestration was also required. Composers were expected to be sensitive for scenes by adding musical descriptive elements appropriate to the action. Successful ballet music depended on melodiousness, simple but beautiful harmonization, and easily remembered motifs. Yet it depended principally on the composer’s profound knowledge of the stage conditions of ballet and the structure of the dance. Tchaikovsky excelled in this.

Tchaikovsky was asked to write the music for a story called “*Swan Lake*.” He approved the story and agreed to 800 rubles to write music for this subject. Even though he showed great enthusiasm for the ballet, it took him about a year to write the entire composition. It has been said that the story was borrowed from ‘a beautiful old German fairy tale.’

On its opening night *Swan Lake* packed the house and brought an overall positive response. Two dance numbers were repeated by public demand. And the principal hero of the performance was the composer, Tchaikovsky, who was greeted by the stormy ‘bravos’ from his delighted public.

*Swan Lake* made Tchaikovsky a ballet specialist. “Yet, the composer is applying symphonic principles to ballet music,” writes Wiley. “Large-scale structure is assumed to be present in Tchaikovsky’s ballets just as it is in his symphonies. In ballet, however, the structure is shaped by the story and the dancers. And melody is a primary concern.”

“And orchestration lies at the heart of Tchaikovsky’s marvelous talent for evocation, most prominently represented by the swan music in *Swan Lake*. “The beautiful swan music – the famous oboe solo accompanied by the harp and tremolo strings.” And those themes are repeated throughout the ballet score. Tchaikovsky knew what he was doing! “*Swan Lake* is perhaps the finest example of the romantic ballet.” Enjoy!

### ***Joined by Coulee Classic***

#### **“O Little Town of Bethlehem”**

***Lewis H. Redner (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 15, 1831; d. Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 29, 1908) – arr. Robertson***

The text to this carol was written by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), an Episcopal priest, then rector of Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia and later of Trinity Church, Boston. He was inspired by visiting the village of Bethlehem in 1865, writing the poem, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," for his church. His organist, Lewis Redner, added the music. The music and words make up one of the most beloved Christmas songs.

## **"Somewhere in My Memory" from *Home Alone*** ***John Williams (b. February 8, 1932)***

John Williams has arranged a great deal of film music for concerts. Williams' particular care for concert versions is proven by the fact that he is the only film composer whose numerous concert suites can easily be found for sale in authoritative full scores. Emilio Audissino has written a book entitled *John Williams's Film Music* and quotes the composer.

Williams states, "If I can take the music out of the soundtrack and so it is almost a resemblance to concert music, this is a minor miracle, and a double asset. If I write 100 minutes of a movie score, there may be 20 minutes that could be extracted and played. The other 80 minutes is functional accompaniment that could never stand on its own and was never intended to do so."

We will hear an example tonight in the set-pieces for chorus and orchestra like the carols in *Home Alone*. 'Somewhere in My Memory' is the theme song for *Home Alone*.

According to author Audissino, "Due to his very tight working schedule, Williams works extensively with orchestrators – people who compose and fill in the musical parts for the instruments." He has collaborated for more than twenty years with Herbert W. Spences who helped orchestrate the works in *Home Alone*, for instance. Williams explains, "The sheer labor of laying out the full score for symphony orchestra would greatly slow me up, so this is where the orchestrator helps."

Williams has composed music for many blockbuster films beyond *Home Alone*, such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and some of the *Harry Potter* movies. For *Home Alone*, Williams composed "comedic cartoon-like scores with extensive Tom and Jerry-like Mickey-Mousing, enriched with original Christmas carols like 'Somewhere in My Memory,'" writes Audissino. The movie was filmed in a house in Winnetka, Illinois, while a church in Oak Park, Illinois, was also used.



***Home Alone***

“John Williams turns 90 years old this year, but he is still composing for movies – pencil, paper, the Steinway, and the stopwatch,” according to the *New York Times* in a February 2022 article. “Yet Williams, whose music permeates popular culture to a degree unsurpassed by any other contemporary composer says he will soon step away from movie projects.”

“Williams – a fixture in the industry since the 1950s, with 52 Academy Award nominations, second only to Walt Disney, and five Oscars – recognizes that he might be the last of a certain type of Hollywood composer,” continues the *New York Times*.

Other works by Williams include theme music for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games, *NBC Sunday Night Football*, and the aching theme from *Schindler’s List*. Violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman who performed *Schindler’s List* theme stated, “His music has a fingerprint. When you hear it, you know it’s John.”

### **A Christmas Sing-Along including “Rock of Ages”**

*John Finnegan (b. August 18, 1926, Salem, Massachusetts; d. January 2, 2007, Milford, Massachusetts)*

John Finnegan received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Music from Harvard University and went on to Boston University for additional studies. He attended the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. Finnegan also played in the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. His orchestral and band arrangements include more than twenty-five scores for the Harvard University Band and for several band publications. A highlight of Finnegan’s career was guest conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra at the twenty-fifth reunion of his Harvard class.

This work is a traditional Christmas sing-along for orchestra and audience. Yes, singing this is a delightful way to start the Holiday season. With all the holiday carols many of us remember learning in our childhood, the sing-a-long is sure to be enjoyable when harmonizing with everyone. “Rock of Ages” is a new addition this year. Join in the merriment – a copy of the words of this sing-along is provided!

- *Jingle Bells*
- *Joy to the World*
- *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*
- *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*
- *Silent Night*
- *Away in a Manger*
- *Rock of Ages*
- *Deck the Halls*
- *O Come, All Ye Faithful*