

December 21, 2024

7:30 pm

“Holiday Romance”

La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

**In collaboration with
Misty and Ballet La Crosse**

Deck the Halls, A Merrie Fugue

Hershy Kay (1919-1981)

Three Pieces from the Peer Gynt Suite, No. 1, Op. 46

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Morning Mood

Anitra's Dance

In the Hall of the Mountain King

Chip Davis / Mannheim Steamroller

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. 1947); Calvin Custer (1939-1998)

"Stille Nacht"

Hanukkah Festival Overture

Lucas Richman (b. 1964)

Swedish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 19: "Midsommarvaka"

Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960)

Chip Davis / Mannheim Steamroller

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. 1947); Calvin Custer (1939-1998)

"Deck the Halls"

INTERMISSION

Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

- I. Miniature Overture
- II. Danses caractéristiques
 - a. Marche
 - b. Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy
 - c. Russian Dance (Trepak)
 - d. Arabian Dance
 - e. Chinese Dance
 - f. Reed Flutes
- III. Waltz of the Flowers

A Holiday Sing-Along

John Finnegan (1926-2007) / Samuel Adler (b. 1928)

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Deck the Halls, A Merrie Fugue

Hershy Kay (b. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Nov. 17, 1919; d. Danbury, Connecticut, Dec. 2, 1981)

Hershy Kay's ingenious treatment of this holiday favorite includes variations in a delicious fugal style. It is truly a memorable rendition.

Hershy Kay was a composer, arranger, and orchestrator. He is most noteworthy for the orchestrations of several Broadway shows, and for the ballets he arranged for George Balanchine's New York City Ballet. His parents were immigrants from Russia. Kay's father was a printer; however, Kay, showing an interest in music, earned a scholarship and entered the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied cello and composition under Randall Thompson. He was a colleague of Leonard Bernstein's (who was a student there as well). Later, he moved to New York, where he played in various pit orchestras and started arranging music.

Bernstein commissioned him to orchestrate his musical comedy *On the Town* in 1944, and Kay became one of the most sought after orchestrators on Broadway. Later collaborations with Bernstein include *Peter Pan* (1950) and *Candide* (1956).

Theodore W. Libbey Jr. writes on December 4, 1981 in an obituary about Mr. Kay in *The New York Times*, “Mr. Kay's film credits included the scores for "Man with the Gun" (1955); "The King and Four Queens" (1956); and "Girl of the Night" (1960). He also wrote a number of television scores, and completed the opera "The Good Soldier Schweik," left unfinished by the composer, Robert Kurka, when he died in 1959.”

“Mr. Kay spent a year teaching orchestration at Columbia University in 1972. His reputation among fellow musicians was that of a consummate professional who never failed under pressure, even if not everything he worked on was a box office or critical success,” reads *The New York Times*.



Hershy Kay

Three Pieces from the Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46

Edvard Grieg (b. Bergen, Norway, June 15, 1843; d. Bergen, Norway, September 4, 1907)

Morning Mood

Anitra's Dance

In the Hall of the Mountain King

The score calls for three flutes with piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, and strings. The duration of these three works is eleven minutes.

Edvard Grieg owed his lifelong commitment to creating a Norwegian national musical style to the early influence of two men: Ole Bull and Rikard Nordraak. "Bull, a violin virtuoso and composer, was something of a folk hero in Norway," writes Jonathan D. Kramer in his book *Listen to the Music: A Self-Guided Tour Through the Orchestral Repertoire*. "He was a symbol of the free spirit of the new Norway, which had recently broken away from four hundred years of Danish domination. Bull was enterprising, independent, and aggressive.

"Grieg was 15 years old when he met the most famous man in Norway. Bull asked to hear some of the boy's compositions, with which he was suitably impressed. He recommended that young Edvard be sent to Germany to study at the Leipzig Conservatory," continues Kramer.

Besides a love of Norway, Grieg showed a love of nature in his music. Karl Haas writes in his book *Inside Music*, "Grieg's work is synonymous with the music of Norway. It is a joy for anyone to examine and reexamine this treasure chest of musical invention, the components of which run the gamut of human emotion."

Grieg wrote the musical score to Henrik Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt*. Peer Gynt was the lead character in the play. The music premiered along with the play on February 24, 1876 in Christiania (now Oslo). This music is termed 'incidental music.' "This term refers to a collection of various orchestral pieces especially created to be interpolated between sections of a stage play or drama," writes Haas. "The function of these works may be to preface the mood of an ensuing act or scene, to recall or elongate the atmosphere of, or musically comment upon, a scene just ended. Many sections of these scores are assembled into suites for concert performance. Grieg's score to Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt* is a notable example of incidental music."

Grieg's musical expression is so completely embedded within the tonal fiber of Norway, and whole love of his native musical language is so persuasive, that he, in effect, nearly created a national musical idiom. His music has become synonymous with the Norwegian musical 'speech' of Norway. Edvard Grieg is wholly identified with Norway.

Morning Mood

This is a very beautiful piece of music. The melody alternates between flute and oboe while the climax occurs early in the piece at the first *forte* (*loud*), which signifies the sun breaking through. The piece depicts the rising of the sun during Act 4, scene 1, of Ibsen's play, which finds Peer Gynt stranded in the Moroccan desert after his companions took his yacht and abandoned him there while he slept. The scene begins with the following description: "Dawn. Acacias and palm trees. Peer Gynt is sitting in his tree using a wrenched-off branch to defend himself against a group of monkeys."

As the Peer Gynt suites take their pieces out of the original context of the play, "Morning Mood" is not widely known in its original setting, and images of Grieg's Scandinavian origins more frequently spring to the minds of its listeners than those of the desert it was written to depict.

Anitra's Dance

Anitra's Dance was written for a scene in the play that takes place in Morocco. One of Peer Gynt's encounters is with an Arabic princess named Anitra. Anitra is the daughter of a Bedouin chief. *Anitra's Dance* features the triangle as well as pizzicato, or plucked, notes in the strings. 'Anitra' is a lovely name. It does seem to be a variant of the eternal Ann (Anna, Anita, Annabelle, etc.).

The Anitra that Peer Gynt met is a colorful character. This Arabic princess first met Peer Gynt when he was exceedingly rich with the wealth won from solving the riddle of the Sphinx. She charmed him, danced for him, cooed him into giving her all of his wealth, and then told him to quickly leave before she sent her father's guards after him!

anitra.net/webring/anitradance.html

In the Hall of the Mountain King

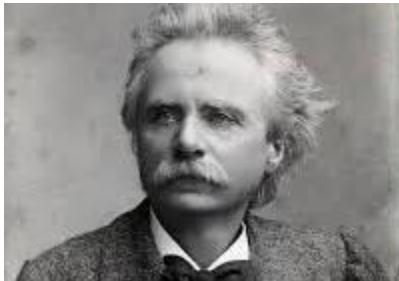
The piece is played as the title character Peer Gynt, in a dream-like fantasy, enters the troll Mountain King's Hall.

A book entitled *Henrik Ibsen-Peer Gynt*, translated by Peter Watts, gives a description of the play. The scene's introduction reads: "There is a great crowd of troll courtiers, gnomes and goblins. The Mountain King, Dovregubben, sits on his throne, with crown and scepter, surrounded by his children and relatives. Peer Gynt stands before him. There is a tremendous uproar in the hall. The lines sung are the first lines in the scene.

Grieg himself wrote in his memoirs, "For the *Hall of the Mountain King*, I have written something that reeks of ultra-Norwegianism."

The simple theme begins slowly and quietly in the lowest registers of the orchestra, played first by the cellos, double basses, and bassoons. After being stated, the main theme is then very slightly modified with a few different ascending notes, but played on different instruments.

The two groups of instruments then move in and out until they eventually "collide" with each other at the same pitch. The tempo gradually speeds up to a prestissimo finale, and the music itself becomes increasingly loud and frenetic.



Edvard Grieg

Davis/Custer: (Mannheim Steamroller)

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. Hamler, Ohio, September 5, 1947); Calvin Custer (b. July 15 1939; d. April 21, 1998)

Chip Davis began piano lessons at the age of four, going on to study music at the University of Michigan's School of Music, specializing in bassoon and percussion. After graduation, he performed with the Norman Luboff Choir, one of the leading choral groups which toured from 1963 to 1987, and recorded more than seventy-five albums.

Davis, now a Grammy Award-winning composer and musician, is credited with introducing what has become known as New Age music more than twenty-five years ago. He is the creator and leading member of *Mannheim*

Steamroller, which has sold more than twenty million copies of their four holiday albums - and is founder and president of American Gramophone, a record company. He lives with his wife and children near Omaha, Nebraska.

"Stille Nacht"

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. Hamler, Ohio, September 5, 1947); Calvin Custer (b. July 15 1939; d. April 21, 1998)

Silent Night (German: *Stille Nacht, heilige 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. This work was published and presented by Mannheim Steamroller. One of Mannheim Steamroller's most popular carols, its unique effects of this Christmas standard make it an ideal centerpiece for the holidays. Davis was awarded his 19th Gold Record in 2010. The Recording Industry Association of America has also awarded Davis four Multi-Platinum and eight Platinum records. Davis' arrangement of *Stille Nacht* was adapted for orchestra and concert use by Calvin Custer.



Chip Davis

Hanukkah Festival Overture

Lucas Richman (b. January 31, 1964)

The score calls for three flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

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. In 2024, Hanukkah begins at sundown on Wednesday, Dec. 25, and lasts until sundown on Thursday, Jan. 2; it is later this year than in previous years.

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), 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."



Lucas Richman

Swedish Rhapsody No. 1, Op. 19: "Midsommarvaka"

Hugo Alfvén (b. Stockholm, Sweden, May 1, 1872; d. Falun, Sweden, May 8, 1960)

Hugo Emil Alfvén was a Swedish composer, conductor, and violinist. Alfvén studied at the Royal College of Music in Sweden with the violin as his main instrument. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Fifth Edition* notes that Alfvén studied painting as well, although he subsequently abandoned this. He also was a gifted writer, composing a four-volume autobiography. Additionally, he took private composition lessons from a leading counterpoint expert. At the same time, he played the violin at the Swedish Royal Orchestra, appearing occasionally as a soloist. A talented musician, he also studied conducting.

Alfvén became Music Director at the Swedish University of Uppsala and directed the male voice choir, becoming active as a composer of choral music, according to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Touring Europe as a conductor, he conducted in festivals at Uppsala, Dortmund, Stuttgart, Gothenburg, and Copenhagen as well as concerts of orchestral music in Vienna, London and areas of Scandinavia.

Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians describes Alfvén as a romantic. "One of his most powerful sources of inspiration was the natural scenery of his native land which he has portrayed in several Swedish rhapsodies, notably in his well-known 'Midsommervaka.' This first rhapsody – *Swedish Rhapsody No. 1, also known as Midsommarvaka (Midsummer Vigil)* – was written in 1903 and is often simply called the "Swedish Rhapsody." It is the best-known piece composed by Alfvén and also one of the best-known pieces of music in Sweden.

Karl Haas writes in his book, *Inside Music*, "Quotations of actual folk tunes and dances constitute a kind of label by which to classify the compositions using them. A fine example is *Midsommarvaka (Midsummer Vigil)*. His music offers an amalgam of national/romantic material clothed in a relatively modern style." *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* notes that "Alfvén's methods of orchestration show the influence of Wagner and Richard Strauss."



Hugo Alfvén

Davis/Custer: (Mannheim Steamroller)

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. Hamler, Ohio, September 5, 1947); Calvin Custer (b. July 15 1939; d. April 21, 1998)

"Deck the Halls"

Louis F. "Chip" Davis, Jr. (b. Hamler, Ohio, September 5, 1947)

Mannheim Steamroller was among the pioneers of neoclassical electronic music, emerging as one of the driving forces behind the New Age phenomenon. Davis worked with classical adaptations he'd composed earlier, and soon began recording what he dubbed "18th century classical rock" -- classical music performed on electric bass and synthesizers. He titled the resulting album *Fresh Aire*.

In 1984, Davis issued *Mannheim Steamroller Christmas*, which sold over five million copies on the strength of a Top 40 Adult Contemporary rendition of "Deck the Halls." With 19 gold records and many more platinum and multi-platinum certifications to his credit, Davis' Mannheim Steamroller (along with U2, Jay-Z, and the Beach Boys) is one of the most decorated artists in the entire recording industry. Davis has also written five children's books and continues to produce music.

INTERMISSION

The Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71

Peter Tchaikovsky (b. Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840; d. Saint Petersburg, Russia, November 6, 1893)

- I. Miniature Overture
- II. Danses caractéristiques
 - a. Marche
 - b. Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy
 - c. Russian Dance (Trepak)
 - d. Arabian Dance
 - e. Chinese Dance
 - f. Reed Flutes
- III. Waltz of the Flowers

The score is written for three flutes and piccolo, three oboes and English horn, three clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, and strings.

In 1891, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was commissioned by the Russian choreographer Marius Petipa to write a full-length ballet based on two stories by the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann. The tales selected by Petipa were *The Nutcracker and the King of the Mice* and the *Nutcracker of Nuremberg*.

Tchaikovsky had already composed two successful ballets, *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, and he was ready for another venture on the ballet stage. In fact, he thought he knew just how to portray snowflakes (which were needed in the tales), with a celesta (a piano-like instrument with a tinkling sound). This instrument features a graduated set of metal sound bars inside that, when played, conjures a sense of fairies and snowflakes. A pianist plays the celesta.

The ballet was first produced, with Petipa's choreography, at the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg on December 18, 1892. When 'The Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy' was first heard, the brilliant, shimmering tones of the celesta delighted the audience!

The plot of the story begins as a Christmas party is in progress. The children come in and receive their gifts and their parents join in the merriment. A guest appears with the most wonderful presents of all: four life-sized dolls whose mechanical workings enables them to dance. To Clara, daughter of his hosts, he gives a Nutcracker with the face of a man. Clara is enchanted.

However, the boys in the party struggle for the Nutcracker, finally breaking it. The party ends, the guest leaves, and Clara is sent to bed.

Clara is unable to sleep. She sneaks downstairs and, as the clock strikes midnight, she hears the rustle of mice. Suddenly the toy soldiers and animals come to life. A battle takes place between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker who is reassembled, ending in the rout of the Mouse King.

Instantly, the Nutcracker turns into a handsome Prince and invites Clara to his Kingdom of Sweets. They fly away through the snow to his kingdom.

In the Kingdom of Sweets, they are greeted by the Sugarplum Fairy, who rules the kingdom. A magnificent celebration is begun in Clara's honor and a long series of dances begins. Then, lastly, comes the 'Waltz of the Flowers,' and the ballet concludes with a final waltz in which everyone joins.

Author Roland John Wiley continues in his book *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, "Few ballets have enjoyed the remarkable vitality of Tchaikovsky's. After nearly a century, *Nutcracker* may be performed throughout the Western world by more ballet companies than any other work. Moreover, Tchaikovsky never lost sight of the practical requirements and stylistic identity of ballet music. He made it more symphonic, but not a symphony."

"Tchaikovsky preserved a fundamental and ennobling simplicity in his ballets, responding to the legitimate call for lighthearted music when it came," continued Wiley. "The talent needed to be simple without being simple-minded, is sensed in the musical result."

"Tchaikovsky made ballet composition a fine occupation. It is difficult to imagine anyone else who could have done this better – indeed, who could have done it at all."



Peter Tchaikovsky

A Holiday Sing-Along

*John Finnegan (b. August 18, 1926, Salem, Massachusetts; d. January 2, 2007, Milford, Massachusetts)
/ Samuel Adler (b. Mannheim, Germany, March 4, 1928)*

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 (the summer

home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra located in the towns of Lenox and Stockbridge in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts). Finnegan also played in the Springfield (Massachusetts) 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 - a delightful way to start the holiday season. With all the holiday carols many of us remember learning in our childhood, the sing-along is sure to be enjoyable when harmonizing with everyone. "Rock of Ages" is a new addition. Join in the merriment – a copy of the words of this sing-along is provided!

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



