



# ATLANTA FREEDOM BANDS

PRESENTS



# Holidays on Peachtree Street

Hosted by: VICTORIA LEMOS

**SAT., DEC. 20, 2025 @ 7PM**

Church at Ponce and Highland  
1085 Ponce de Leon Ave NE, Atlanta 30306

[AtlantaFreedomBands.com](http://AtlantaFreedomBands.com)



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## Happy Holidays from AFB!

Welcome to Atlanta Freedom Bands' annual holiday concert! We are so glad you are spending this special evening with us. We are in such a festive mood, and we hope to share that joy with you.

Tonight's concert kicks off our 33<sup>rd</sup> performance season. Our season spanning theme is "No Places Like Home". With each performance, we celebrate a place we call home, starting tonight with Atlanta as celebrate "Holidays on Peachtree Street". Our festively eclectic program features pieces inspired by the landmarks along our city's most famous street. We will continue in March with "Georgia on Our Minds", a festival of music by Georgia composers. The season concludes with "Americans We". Taking place two weeks before the Semiquincentennial, our June concert features works by an amazing diversity of composers spanning the breadth of our nation.

Tonight we embark on a new era for our Concert Band as we welcome our new Artistic Director, O'Shae Best, to the podium. He brings a wealth of talent and experience to AFB, having directed middle school, high school, university, and community bands. You are sure to be intrigued and entertained by the works and programs he is planning for the future, building on our longtime commitment to featuring a diverse array of composers.

You also have the chance to meet a remarkably talented young composer tonight. Jacob Cirabisi is the first composer of the *tenth* year of our Student Composer Residency Program. He just finished his first semester at the University of West Georgia, making him one of the youngest composers we have met in our program. After hearing his "Midnight Snowfall", I am sure you will join us in anticipating many wonderful works from him in the future.

Togetherness is such an important part of the holiday season. Whether you celebrate with a family of birth or a family of choice (or both), we are proud to have you as a part of our AFB family tonight. Joining together in community is how we navigate difficult times. We hope your holidays are filled with peace, joy, love, and, of course, lots of great music!

# Special Thanks for Tonight's Concert

🎵 **Church at Ponce and Highland** for tonight's concert venue. We are grateful for the assistance of Jim Wright, Facilities Management Director, and Rev. Mimi Walker, Senior Pastor.

🎵 **Central Congregational United Church of Christ** in North Druid Hills for providing our rehearsal home, Rev. Elizabeth Mitchell Clement, Senior Minister.

🎵 This program is supported in part by the **Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs**. Thank you to the Mayor's Office, the Atlanta City Council, and City of Atlanta residents in the audience.

🎵 Funding for this program is also provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the **Fulton County Arts Council**. Thank you to the Fulton County Commissioners and Fulton County residents in the audience.

🎵 This program is supported in part by the **Georgia Council for the Arts** through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. Georgia Council for the Arts also receives support from its partner agency - the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

🎵 Members of the **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and Atlanta Women's Chorus** for joining us in song.

🎵 **Dan Lax Media** for concert photography.



Proud member of the  
ASSOCIATION OF CONCERT BANDS:  
*The International Voice of Community Bands*



## About Atlanta Freedom Bands

Atlanta musician Buz Carr attended the 1993 Pride Parade and noticed there was no marching band. “We can’t have a parade with floats and not have a marching band,” he remarked as he set about recruiting musicians to form the Atlanta Freedom Marching Band. The marching band appeared not only in the Atlanta Pride Parade, but also in neighborhood festivals and events across the city and in Pride events across the Southeast.

Over the years, the organization grew to become Atlanta Freedom Bands. Now thirty-two years later, AFB still represents our city’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community through music. AFB includes the original Marching Band as well as the MetroGnomes Stage Band (2001), the Color Guard (2010) and, of course, the Atlanta Freedom Concert Band (2004) appearing in tonight’s concert. We have also offered a variety of smaller ensembles to meet the musical interests of our members over time, including a brass quintet, a wind quintet, a saxophone ensemble and more.

AFB is a member of Pride Bands Alliance, a network of bands in cities across the United States, Canada, and Australia. Our members joined others for annual conferences as well as historic events such as Inaugurations of Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, Gay Games events in Amsterdam, Sydney, Paris and Chicago, and the Millennium March for Equality. Atlanta Freedom Bands hosted the Alliance’s annual convention in October 2013 with over 250 musicians from 33 different bands in attendance.

AFB has commissioned three works for band across its history, and will present the premiere of a fourth commissioned work at its June 2026 concert. AFB’s Student Composer Residency Program invites local collegiate composers to submit works to present to our audiences.

We welcome musicians at all levels and all orientations and identities to join in our activities and become part of our band family. All of our ensembles welcome the opportunity to partner with groups in the community to help raise awareness, raise funds or just raise the roof with good music. Atlanta Freedom Bands is a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable corporation.



## **O'Shae D. Best** **Artistic Director**

O'Shae D. Best is the Director of Bands at Fayette County High School, in Fayetteville, Georgia where he oversees all aspects of the band program. He also serves as the Fine Arts Chair at Fayette County High School. He was recently elected as the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) District VI Treasurer. Prior

to his roles in Georgia, he was the Band Director at Crestdale Middle School in Matthews, NC. Previously he was elected to be the Band Section Delegate for the North Carolina Music Education Association (NCMEA) for 2022-2024. He also served as the Assistant Artistic Director of the Charlotte Pride Band for five years.

Best served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the Mead Witter School of Music, located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he led non-major University Band, guest conducted the UW Wind Ensemble and Concert Band, and assisted with the UW Marching Band. He received his BM in Music Education from East Carolina University and his MM in Wind Conducting from the University of Wisconsin - Madison, where he studied under Scott Teeple, with studies completed with Mark Hetzler (trombone), Tom Curry (tuba/euphonium), and Chad Hutchinson (orchestral conducting). O'Shae is a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, National Association for Music Education, and the National Band Association.



## **Kurt Wackerly**

### **Associate Director**

Currently serving in the role of Interim Artistic Director, Kurt Wackerly has been the Associate Director of the Atlanta Freedom Concert Band since 2011. He graduated from Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 1994 with a Bachelors in Music Education, and became a member of the Ohio Music Education Association, the Hancock County Music Teachers Association, and the Findlay Community Band. During his time in Ohio, he was the band director and choral instructor for grades 5 through 12 in the McComb Local School District near Lima, Ohio.



Mr. Wackerly moved to Atlanta in 2001 to pursue professional opportunities, and that was where he discovered the Atlanta Concert Band. He joined that band as a French horn player and was later appointed as an assistant conductor for his merits from 2007 to 2011. He later discovered the AFB through networking and joined it in 2011, where he played French horn and soon took up the position of Associate Director for the Concert Band that he has held to this day.

During his time in Atlanta, he joined the Atlanta Wind Symphony and the Callanwolde Concert Band. He served as associate conductor of both ensembles when he was a member. As for his business career, he is a licensed manager at FirstService Residential, a professional property management company.





## **Victoria Lemos Archive Atlanta Concert Host**

Victoria Lemos is the voice, sweat and tears behind Archive Atlanta, a bi-weekly history podcast that releases the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month, sharing stories of the people, places and events that have made this city what it is. The podcast has been going strong for the last seven years, with over 300 episodes that have been downloaded 900,000 times in hundreds of countries and all 50 states.

Born in NYC to immigrant parents, she's called Atlanta home for twenty years.

She began as a volunteer tour guide with the Atlanta Preservation Center, then became a bike tour guide with Bicycle Tours of Atlanta and then in 2018, began podcasting about all the history she still needed to share! Whether you call it hopeful or naïve, her goal is to share Atlanta's amazing history with the most people possible, because you can't care about something you don't know about. In a city that was born from the ashes, we don't prioritize preservation or the past, but together we can change that. She truly believes knowing about the past helps us all be better humans in the present and future.



# A Brief History of Peachtree Street

Seventy one streets in our city carry the name of “Peachtree”. One stands out among them, Atlanta’s famous Peachtree Street. Underneath all the skyscrapers, magnificent buildings, glitz, and glam lies an interesting history.

The Muscogee Creek people had a settlement called Pakanahuili at the convergence of the Chattahoochee River and Peachtree Creek. The name translates to “Standing Peach Tree”. The place marked a convergence of paths used by native peoples for trade and travel. One path led to the heart of today’s Buckhead and another led south to connect to the Sandtown Trail at today’s Five Points. This southern path became Peachtree Street.

The native peoples of the area began to be forced out during the War of 1812 when the State of Georgia built a fort at Standing Peach Tree and cut roads over the old Muscogee trails. By the end of 1827, all Muscogee lands in the State of Georgia were lost.

In 1837, the southern terminal of the Western & Atlantic Railroad was established at the southern end of the Peachtree Trail, leading to a settlement called “Terminus”. Terminus became Marthasville in 1843, then Atlanta in 1845.

Leading north out of the busy downtown business district, Peachtree Street was initially a street where well-to-do Atlantans built palatial homes, only a handful of which still survive today. By the end of the 1800s, the street was filled with horse-drawn carriages and the new electric streetcars, which kept pushing development further northward. Increasing population in the first half of the 1900s led to the building of apartments and businesses, which replaced the older homes.

Neighborhoods along Peachtree saw a decline in the 1950s and 60s as people moved out to the suburbs, thanks to the new system of expressways. Neighborhood preservation efforts began in the 1970s and 80s as a new business center began to establish itself along Peachtree in Midtown. The transformation resulted in the loss of many historic landmarks along Peachtree, and nearly resulted in the destruction of the Fox Theatre. In recent decades, over 11 billion dollars worth of development has occurred in Midtown, dramatically changing the Peachtree streetscape.

Through all the changes, Peachtree Street remains a symbol of our city. It is where we gather to celebrate World Series wins and Olympic moments. It is a path we march down when demanding equality and justice. It is where we strut our stuff in parades and with Pride.



O'Shae D. Best, Artistic Director  
 Kurt Wackerly, Associate Director  
 Hosted by Victoria Lemos from Archive Atlanta

**A Christmas Festival (1950)<sup>OB</sup>** Leroy Anderson (1908-1975)

We invite you to sing along as led by our vocalists.

*Sponsored by O'Shae Best: "As the new Artistic Director, it is my pleasure to sponsor our first piece of the new season! I am excited to take the helm of the AFB Concert Band as we bring in the holiday season."*

**O Magnum Mysterium (1994)<sup>OB</sup>** Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)  
 transcribed (2003) by H. Robert Reynolds

Dedicated to our friends in the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus  
 and Atlanta Women's Chorus

*Sponsored by Bob Hults: "Beautiful playing, Fitz! – sponsored by Bob Hults"*

**Concert Suite from "The Polar Express" (2004)** Alan Silvestri (b. 1950)  
 arr. Jerry Brubaker lyrics by Glenn Ballard (1953)

*Believe • The Polar Express*

*When Christmas Comes to Town • Spirit of the Season (2019)*

*Sponsored by Reed Johansson: "Rock the house, Lux!"*

*Sponsored by Toni Raines: "To our son, Everett, the Atlanta Freedom Bands' Baby! This song reminds us to see Christmas through new eyes and with child-like wonder, just like you. We can't wait for our first Christmas together, so hop aboard the polar express! We love you, Mama & Daddy"*

**Let It Snow! / Winter Wonderland (2005)<sup>OB</sup>** arr. Ralph Ford  
 Let It Snow! (1945) Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne  
 Winter Wonderland (1934) Felix Bernard and Richard Bernhard Smith

**Winter Milky Way (2012)<sup>OB</sup>** Yukiko Nishimura (b. 1967)  
*Sponsored by Daniel Barker: "I love everything we're playing, but this piece touches my heart in a special way."*

Selections from **The Nutcracker (1892)<sup>OB</sup>**  
 arr. Robert Longfeld Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)  
 Chinese Dance • Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy • Russian Dance (Trepak)  
*Sponsored by Diane Quilter: "In memory of my mom Diane Watts Quilter, without whom I would not have found my love of music."*

## — Intermission —

**A Hanukkah Festival (2011)<sup>OB</sup>** arr. Chris M. Bernotas (b. 1969)  
Sevivon Sov, Sov, Sov • Maoz Tzur • Hanukkah

*Sponsored by Michael McFarlin: "To my very handsome and very Jewish husband, Stefan! Happy Hanukkah!"*

**Diminished Minor Alterations (2018)<sup>KW</sup>** David Lovrien (b. 1963)  
"Christmas Through the Looking Glass"

*Sponsored by Ethan Messere: "Happy Holidays from the AFB Trumpets"  
"To anyone finding themselves on the naughty list this year ;)" - the French Horns*

**Disco Christmas (1978)<sup>KW</sup>** arr. Bill Holcombe (1924-2010)  
Jingle Bells • Deck the Hall • We Wish You A Merry Christmas

*From those of us that were alive for the disco era.....  
to those that missed out on the fun (?). Go 'bones. — Brian G (BeeGee)*

**Midnight Snowfall (2025)<sup>OB</sup>** Jacob Cirabisi (b. 2007)  
*Tonight is the premiere performance.*

*Sponsored by Andrew Redmon: "To my daughter, Rosalyn. May you always find the magic in this world that the snow brings. - love Dad"*

*Sponsored by Hannah Dunn: "To the most sophisticated and serene section:  
#AFBonez"*

**Christmas and Sousa Forever (2010)<sup>OB</sup>** John Philip Sousa (1854-1932)  
"The Stars and Stripes Forever" arr. Julie Giroux (b. 1961)

*Sponsored by Eddie Young: "Keeping music coming in through the ears! Someday, we will play the piccolo obligato for the FINAL, FINAL time!"*

*Sponsored by the AFB Flutes: "Happy birthday, Brandon Gray! Your flute section will loudly and proudly play the Sousa piccolo part in your honor."*

**Auld Lang Syne (2001)<sup>OB</sup>** Sam Baltzer  
We invite you to stand, link arms, and sing along to the final verse.

*Tom Crawford, bagpiper*  
*Sponsored by Sean Max: "To my friend, Casey Purser. I wish you were here today, for auld lang syne."*

### Tonight's Vocalists from Voices of Note

#### Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus

David Artadi-Beno  
Jake Dyer  
Jeffrey Seyller

#### Atlanta Women's Chorus

Victoria Blaire  
Brittney Cook  
Cailleen Jones  
Sara Van Cor

<sup>OB</sup> Conducted by O'Shae D. Best

<sup>KW</sup> Conducted by Kurt Wackerly

**We kindly ask you to silence your mobile devices for the recording.  
You can relive the concert at Atlanta Freedom Bands'  
YouTube channel. Please tag your concert photos with #AFB33.**

# Tonight's Concert Performers

## Flute

‡ Brandon Gray (13)  
Daisha Davis (25)  
Daniel Funston (24)  
Alexandria Jones ()  
Darius Mackie (23)  
Anthony Neal (24)  
Freddie Powell (24)  
Peter Prefontaine (13)  
Beth Savoy (19)  
Sara Tonks (25)

## Piccolo

Sara Tonks (25)

## Oboe

‡ Robert Simon (17)

## Bassoon

Darius Gourdine (25)

## Clarinet

‡ Annette Piepenhagen (13)  
‡ Aaron Smith (23)  
Grace Aspenwall (25)  
Jason Baker (25)  
Daniel Barker (11)  
Bruce Bythwood (21)  
Taylor Carstens (24)  
Ann Cooley (21)  
Emily Victoria Harris (24)  
Zora Joyner (23)  
Austin Latimer (25)  
Emma Smith (24)  
Toni Raines (24)  
Sivani Vyas (25)

## Bass Clarinet

Cecil Land (17)  
Diane Quilter (23)

## Alto Saxophone

‡ Beth Fordyce (09)  
Bradley Bee (25)  
Travis Bishop (25)  
Audrey Brasuell (23)  
Drew Johnson (23)  
Demarius Newsome (25)  
Cristian Perez (23)  
Toni Ralston (23)

## Tenor Saxophone

Matt Akins (15)  
Sierra Wyble (24)

## Baritone Saxophone

Benjamin Bebe (25)  
Katie Mitchell (23)

## Trumpet

‡ Fitz Dement (23)  
‡ Ethan Messere (22)  
Torsten Behrens (24)  
João M. Cleaver (15)  
Tyler Hodge (24)  
Bob Hults (23)  
Jonathan Law (12)  
Andre Leon (25)  
Sean Max (25)  
Lillian Piepenhagen (22)  
Andrew Redmon (25)  
William Rohrbach (25)

## French Horn

‡ Kurt Wackerly (11)  
Landon Bubb (24)  
Michael McFarlin (12)  
John McNamara (21)  
Rachel Scarboro (23)  
Amy Toale (17)  
Auston Whitlock (20)  
Anna Wodny (25)

## Trombone

‡ Hannah Dunn (19)  
‡ Henry Gallagher (24)  
Alex Drake (25)  
Brian Gross (24)  
Larry Henderlight-Gómez (14)  
Beth Herndon (15)  
Jason Jackson (24)  
Lux Johansson (25)  
Daniel Lucas (25)  
Brittney Pham (25)  
Danimal Tiger (24)

## Euphonium

‡ Edward Ehlers (23)  
Kazuki Koide (24)  
Zakariya Thiam (24)

## Tuba

‡ Cliff Norris (96)  
Will Sego (16)  
Jason Peragallo (12)  
Dez (14)

## String Bass

Destiny Hayes (25)

## Percussion

‡ Mitch Cave (13)  
Mads Andrews (22)  
Jenna Galligan (24)  
John Haunson (25)  
Suzanne Kamm McHann (23)  
Sara Nester (23)  
George Oh (22)  
Mel Raines (24)  
Erin Seligsohn (24)  
‡ Section Leader

Year of joining the band in parentheses

# Atlanta Freedom Bands Leadership

## Board of Directors

### Officers

<i>President</i>	Jason Morley
<i>Vice President</i>	Oliver Spirito
<i>Secretary</i>	Charlene Stein

### Representatives

<i>Concert Band</i>	Suzanne Kamm McHann
<i>Marching Band</i>	Candace Miller
<i>Color Guard</i>	Christopher Brooks
<i>MetroGnomes</i>	Nanette King

### **Artistic Leaders**

<i>Artistic Director</i>	O'Shae Best
<i>Associate Director</i>	Kurt Wackerly
<i>MetroGnomes Director</i>	Nic Chambers
<i>Marching Band Director</i>	Fitz Dement
<i>Color Guard Director</i>	Michel Brandon Boddie

### **Ensemble Coordinators**

<i>Concert Band</i>	Aaron Smith
<i>Marching Band</i>	Abby Gaskins
<i>Color Guard</i>	Michel Brandon Boddie
<i>MetroGnomes</i>	Beth Herndon

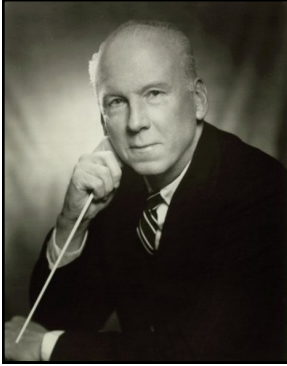
### **Organizational Leaders**

<i>Development &amp; Marketing</i>	Cliff Norris
<i>Marching Band Drum Major</i>	Edward Ehlers
<i>Librarian</i>	Brandon Gray
<i>Founder and Guiding Spirit</i>	Walter L. "Buz" Carr, Jr.



## “Holidays on Peachtree Street” Program Notes

*A large-print version is available from your ushers.*



Leroy Anderson’s unique place in twentieth century American music rests primarily upon a few dozen miniature instrumental compositions that continue to captivate audiences in the twenty-first century. One reason why they have done so is that the industrious composer spared little effort to make them available in as many formats as he and his publishers could think of. Much of Anderson’s output exists in multiple arrangements for various instrumental and vocal combinations.

Unlike many composers who left the task of arrangements to others hired by their publishers, Mr. Anderson wrote most of these wind band charts himself (he did thirty in all). This is entirely characteristic of a composer who was obsessed with quality control, eager to present his best possible face before the public at all times. He also conducted his wind band arrangements in concert in his later years whenever he got the chance.

In an interview with Dick Bertel of WTIC Radio (Hartford, Connecticut) in the 1960s, Anderson had this to say about **A Christmas Festival**: “Well, I was trying to write a Christmas festival. You see, there are all types of things that have been written for various occasions and in this particular case I was working at the time for the Boston Pops, I was the arranger and orchestrator for them for years, and they wanted to record a special concert number, using Christmas songs, carols and other Christmas music, for records, so they asked, Arthur Fiedler asked me to do a concert overture, and this is how it came about. I selected the ones that were the most popular and best known, and then I took them and tried to give instrumental treatment to them; in other words, it’s not a medley, that isn’t what we wanted to do here, certainly what I didn’t want to do. I rather took the themes and built you might say a concert overture, around the Christmas songs.

They’re not just carols because in this we end with ‘Jingle Bells’, that is, of course, a secular song, it’s not a carol, but it’s associated so much with the gaiety and spirit of Christmas that you certainly couldn’t leave it out.”



**Morten Johannes Lauridsen** (b. 1943) is one of the most performed American composers. A recipient of the National Medal of Arts in 2007, he is professor emeritus of composition at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music where he taught for fifty-two years until retiring in

2019. He originally worked as a Forest Service firefighter before moving to USC to study composition. In awarding Mr. Lauridsen the National Medal of the arts, President Bush cited “his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide.” His works have appeared on more than 200 CDs, garnering five Grammy Award nominations, including for “O Magnum Mysterium”. His musical approaches are very diverse, ranging from direct to abstract in response to various characteristics of the text he sets. In 2016 he was awarded the ASCAP Foundation’s Life in Music Award

In **O Magnum Mysterium**, Mr. Lauridsen sets an ancient responsorial chant from the Matins of Christmas in a deeply moving, modern setting. Composers from the Renaissance to the present day have set the intriguing text to music. Mr. Lauridsen wrote about his work: “For centuries, composers have been inspired by the beautiful ‘O Magnum Mysterium’ text with its depiction of the birth of the newborn King among the lowly animals and shepherds. This affirmation of God’s grace to the meek and the adoration of the Blessed Virgin are celebrated in my setting through a quiet song of profound inner joy.” The text and translation are as follows:

*O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum  
in praesepe.  
O beata virgo, cuius viscera  
meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum.  
Alleluia!*

O great mystery,  
and wonderful sacrament,  
that beasts see the newborn Lord  
lying in a manger.  
O blessed virgin, whose womb  
was worthy to bear  
the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Alleluia!

**Alan Silvestri** (b. 1950) is one of America’s most prolific composers for film and television. After attending Berklee College of Music for two years, he started his composing career in 1972 at age 21. His first major assignment was for the TV show *CHiPs*, writing the music for 109 of the show’s 139 episodes. He met producer Roger Zemeckis, starting a decades-long collaboration that continues to this day. Beginning with Zemeckis’s *Romancing the Stone* in 1984, the collaboration has resulted in music for the *Back the Future* trilogy, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, *Forrest Gump*, *Contact*, *Cast Away*, *Captain America*, and *Avengers: End Game*. Other notable credits include *Predator*, *The Abyss*, and the 2014 science documentary series *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey*.



From his biography: “While stylistically diverse, the unifying voice of Mr. Silvestri’s work is an unmistakable rhythmic melody whose themes continue to embody movie excitement and drama for generations of moviegoers.”

He and his wife have recently started a vineyard at their home on California's Monterey peninsula. He writes: "There's something about the elemental side of wine making that appeals to me. Both music making and wine making involve the blending of art and science. Just as each note brings its own voice to the melody, each vine brings its own unique personality to the wine".

Tonight we highlight music from the animated holiday classic *The Polar Express*. The soundtrack, released in 2004, garnered several awards, including a Grammy in 2006 and an Oscar nomination for "Believe" for Best Original Song in 2005. The album was certified gold in 2007 and has become the best-selling soundtrack/holiday album of all time.

**"Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!"**, also known as "Let It Snow", is a song written by lyricist Sammy Cahn and composer Jule Styne in July 1945. It was written in Hollywood, California, during a heat wave as Cahn and Styne imagined cooler conditions. Singer Vaughn Monroe made the first recording, which reached the number one spot on the Billboard chart for five weeks in December and January 1945-46. Despite the lyrics making no mention of any holiday, the song has come to be regarded as a Christmas song in North America due to its winter theme, being played on radio stations during the Christmas and holiday season, and having often been covered by various artists on Christmas-themed albums. In the Southern Hemisphere, however, it can be played during the winter months of June, July, and August; and in New Zealand, some play it at Matariki.

**"Winter Wonderland"** was written in 1934 by Felix Bernard and lyricist Richard Benham Smith. Smith, a native of Honesdale, Pennsylvania, was inspired to write the lyrics after seeing Honesdale's Central Park covered in snow. He wrote the lyrics while being treated for tuberculosis. The song was originally recorded in 1934 thanks to a recording session with the RCA Victor orchestra that ended with some extra time. Guy Lombardo's version would become one of the biggest hits of 1934. As of 2025, 18 versions of "Winter Wonderland" play on Christmas music radio stations.



**Yukiko Nishimura** graduated from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music in 1990. She began private study with Dr. Alfred Reed at the University of Miami School of Music and in 1993 she continued her studies with Dr. Richard Danielpour at the Manhattan School of Music.

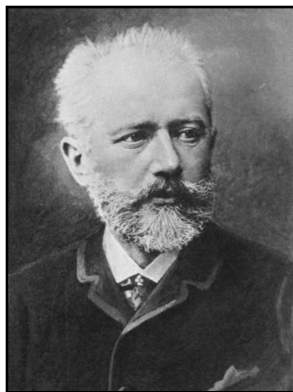
She has developed a distinguished and prolific composing and performing career. Her works include pieces for band, orchestra, solo instruments, and even silent films. Among her honors, she received special mention at the 15th and 26th International Competition for Original Composition for Band in Corciano, Italy, the 6th Aoyama Award, and the

second prize at the concerto competition at University of Miami as a pianist.

Since 1996, she has given concerts consisting entirely of her own music in Japan. In 2003, she gave a solo piano recital at New York Public Library, Donnell Library Center. In 2005, her commissioned work for the first silent film in the United States Edison's 1910 "Frankenstein" for string quartet was premiered in Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania by Covington String Quartet of Washington D.C. In 2007, Nishimura's commissioned work for the Japanese silent film, directed by Kenji Mizoguchi, "Water Magician (1933)" for cello and string bass was premiered at Kyoto Cinema in Kyoto, Japan. Nishimura's music was nominated in 2018 in the category of Contemporary Classical/Instrumental for "Hollywood Music in Media Award".

The composer writes about "**Winter Milky Way**": The image of this music is the color of white. If I could express this "whiteness" in my music, I believed it would be a pleasant experience for me. The music brings the smell of winter season: you can imagine the snow or chilly air or maybe even clear skies and ice. Once could also feel the joy of the holiday season.

Arguably the most popular Russian composer of all time, **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's** (1840 – 1893) music features tuneful, open-hearted melodies, impressive harmonies, and colorful, picturesque orchestration, all of which evoke a profound emotional response. Tchaikovsky's first recorded attempt at composition was at age 4. After preparing his son for a career in the civil service, Tchaikovsky's father finally came to realize his son's vocation and invited a professional teacher to give him piano lessons. In October 1861, he began attending music classes offered by the recently founded Russian Musical Society. When St. Petersburg Conservatory opened the following fall, Tchaikovsky was among its first students.



After graduating in December 1865, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow to teach music theory at the Russian Musical Society, soon thereafter renamed the Moscow Conservatory. At the very end of 1875, Tchaikovsky left Russia to travel in Europe and in 1876 he completed *Swan Lake*. In 1876 he began an extraordinary relationship with a patroness who arranged a monthly stipend that enabled him to resign from the conservatory in 1878 and devote his efforts to writing music. He overcame his fear of conducting with the premiere of his opera *Cherevichki* in 1887. He met with great success on European concert tours. Then in the spring of 1891, Tchaikovsky was invited to visit the United States on the occasion of the inauguration of Carnegie Hall in New York City. He conducted before enthusiastic audiences in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Upon his return to Russia, he completed his last two compositions for the stage—the one-act opera *Iolanta* (1891) and a two-act ballet *The Nutcracker* (1892).

In Western countries, *The Nutcracker* has become perhaps the most popular of all ballets, performed primarily around Christmas time. The story takes place in two acts, with the libretto adapted from E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King". Posters at the Saint Petersburg premiere announced a "fairy tale" ballet, and the magical orchestration in the score certainly lived up to that billing. Unfortunately, the traditional ballet audiences of the time found the rich effects and the child-centered story just a bit too strange. The ballet's first complete performance in the United States took place in San Francisco on Christmas Eve, 1944, with enormous success. By the 1960s, holiday performances of *The Nutcracker* had spread throughout the United States.



**Chris M. Bernotas** is a renowned composer, conductor, and educator with over 25 years of experience in music education. As the Director of Instrumental Publications for Alfred Music, he contributes significantly to developing materials for band and orchestra programs worldwide. Celebrated for their accessibility and emotional depth, his compositions are performed by ensembles globally, from young musicians just beginning their journey to advanced groups seeking dynamic and engaging repertoire. His works have become staples in concert literature, offering a blend of musicality and educational value.

In addition to his success as a composer, Bernotas has dedicated his career to teaching and working with students of all levels. His classroom experience provides him with valuable insight into the challenges music teachers face, allowing him to create music that both inspires students and addresses their developmental needs. He frequently serves as a guest conductor and clinician, leading honor groups and workshops that introduce fresh ideas and approaches to directors and their students.

**"A Hanukkah Festival"** is a medley of three traditional Hanukkah songs: "Sevivon, Sov, Sov, Sov", "Maoz Tzur", and "Hanukkah". "Sevivon", also known as "the other dreidel song", celebrates the great miracle that happened in Israel. The setting has a dramatic melody and is written with a variety of accompaniment leading to a brief, but impressive clarinet that leads into "Maoz Tzur". Composed in the 13th century and meaning "Rock of Ages", "Maoz Tzur" is a hymn about the challenges faced by the Jewish people that have been overcome with God's help. This traditional piece is scored with full, rich voicings along with the beautiful melody. The final section of the piece, "Hanukkah", invokes the joy of the celebration. It is a bright and playful march leading to an exciting conclusion.

**David Lovrien** (b. 1963) has been a member of the saxophone section of Dallas Wind Symphony since 1991, performing on nearly all their recordings and appearing several times as featured soloist. He also acts as the group's staff arranger and webmaster. He is also a founding member of the renowned Texas Saxophone Quartet, the first saxophone ensemble to win the prestigious Fischhoff Competition in 1986. His compositions and arrangements have been performed throughout the world, and his website celebrating the life and work of John Philip Sousa is recognized as the best Sousa authority on the Internet. David has over 30 years experience in software development and project management, most recently at Thomson Reuters Tax & Accounting. David currently lives in Plano, Texas, with his wife Grace. He enjoys Asian cooking, genealogy, and time with their four children and three grandchildren.



Let's play a game of Christmas hide-and-seek! *“Diminished Minor Alterations”* twists your favorite Christmas melodies into something new and inventive. By transporting the tunes from major keys to minor keys, changing styles, and overlapping melodies onto one another, each carol takes on a completely new character. Alternatively dramatic and funny, wistful and energetic, this medley is full of musical surprises from start to finish. This is Lovrien's third installment of his “Minor Alterations” carol arrangements.

Although **Bill Holcombe** was primarily known as an arranger and composer of music for recording dates and symphony orchestras, for many years he pursued a parallel career as a professional woodwind doubler.

He studied composition at the University of Pennsylvania in 1941, then became the piccolo player of the Philadelphia Orchestra. In addition to his extensive training in writing music, Bill majored in flute at Juilliard. After World War II, Bill returned to Penn, working his way through college playing with and arranging for area big bands. After graduating from Penn (with high honors), Bill went to New York City to break into the then lucrative staff radio and recording scene. Bill was introduced to Tommy Dorsey, who hired him as a utility reed player and staff arranger. After a year with the Tommy Dorsey Band, Bill returned to New York, taking a six-month position with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. When he completed this stint, Bill was hired to play first flute and doubles for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer at their New York radio station, WMGM. In the late fifties, Bill wrote the music for several film scores. Throughout the sixties, he wrote for the recording orchestra 101 Strings during the day and played Broadway musicals at night.



Since founding Musicians Publications, he wrote and edited several hundred pieces for chamber ensembles, developed an internationally acclaimed series of jazz etude books and led his company to the forefront of small American music publishers.

Holcombe's "**Disco Christmas**" boogies us back to the 1970s with upbeat settings of three favorite holiday songs.



**Jacob Cirabisi**, 18, was born in New York before moving to Newnan, Georgia where he was raised. He was first introduced to music through his 6th grade band program, and has been playing trombone in numerous ensembles ever since! He picked up composing as a hobby during his freshman year of high school with some friends, and hasn't stopped since. Now, Jacob is currently a first-year music education and music composition major at the University of West Georgia.

Besides music, Jacob loves to play video games and hang out with his friends and family. He also runs a YouTube channel (@jacobcirabisi) where he posts all

his most recent compositions.

"**Midnight Snowfall**" paints the scene of a calm winter snowfall, beginning with the first snowflakes glimmering in the moonlight, represented by metallic percussion, to the gradual end of the snowfall as the storm subsides. The main melody, lullaby-like with its tender rises and falls, reflects the gentle movement of falling snow, while the rich brass harmonies underneath act as a gradual accumulation of snow forming a heavy blanket on the ground.



Born into a musical family, **John Philip Sousa** (1854-1932) was the son of John Antonio, a trombone player in the United States Marine Band. When John Philip had his heart set on running away with the circus at age 13, his father enlisted him as an apprentice violinist. Sousa matured in the Marine Band until he resigned at age 20. He pursued violin and conducting opportunities until asked by the Corps in 1880 to be the 17th conductor. In 1892 he resigned the Corps a second time to form an all civilian band. His concerts were the rock concerts of their day and featured light classics, novelties, instrumental solos, marches, and rapid-fire encores.

Keith Brion from the United States Marine Band provides some interesting facts: For most attendees, a Sousa concert was their first introduction to the music of Wagner, Respighi, and Richard Strauss. The only instrument he played professionally was the violin. Sousa's band marched only eight times

in their forty year existence. Sousa created “secret arrangements” of his marches for his own performances. The nickname the “March King” was bestowed by a British band journalist who once remarked if Johann Strauss, Jr. was call the “Waltz King” then Sousa should be the “March King.”

Sousa consistently stated that “**Stars and Stripes Forever**” was divinely inspired and was born of homesickness. In his autobiography Sousa wrote that as he was aboard the *Teutonic*, returning home from Europe in 1896, he paced the deck incessantly. The rhythmic beat of a band kept playing in his mind, unfolding themes and melodies as the crossing continued. He didn’t set a note to paper until he reached the shore again, writing out the complete march on Christmas Day and never once changing a note afterward. Later on he explained to the press that the three themes of the trio represent the three sections of the United States. The melody represents the North. The South is represented by the piccolo obbligato, and the West by the trombone counter melody.

**Julie Ann Giroux** (b. 1961) was born in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, and Monroe, Louisiana. She began composing by age 8, and published her first piece at age 9. Giroux attended college at Boston College and Louisiana State University. She studied composition with John Williams, Bill Conti and Jerry Goldsmith. She is an accomplished performer on piano and horn, but her first love is composition. In 1981, Giroux published her first band work. Literally days after college graduation, she had the opportunity to arrange and conduct several arrangements for a live ESPN broadcast and was hired to work on the mini-series “North and South.”



Giroux composed and orchestrated music for many television and films, receiving her first of three Emmy nominations in 1989. When she won her first Emmy Award, Giroux was the first woman and the youngest person ever to win the award in that category. In 1998, Giroux decided to return to her roots full time, composing primarily for concert bands, wind ensembles and other various “serious” forms of music.

In “**Christmas and Sousa Forever**”, Giroux mashes lines from favorite holiday tunes into the textures of Sousa’s immortal “Stars and Stripes Forever”, making for a double treat. See if you can find all the musical quotes hidden throughout!



**Dr. Sam Baltzer** received degrees in music education from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, North Texas State University and Indiana University. He recently retired after teaching music for 44 years at the middle school, high school, and college levels. Baltzer founded and continues to direct several community music ensembles, including the Northwest Georgia Winds, the Clock Tower Jazz Ensemble and the Chamber Players of the South. He has written articles published in several music journals and has led workshops at the Georgia Music Educators Association Convention. He is also an active performing musician and composer/arranger of over 400 pieces,

many of which are published by Bag O' Winds Press and listed at [www.jwpepper.com](http://www.jwpepper.com).

Dr. Baltzer resides in Rome, Georgia, with his wife of 45 years, Janet, who is the founder and volunteer director of Angel Express, Inc., a local goods and service charity. He can be reached at [sambaltzer12@gmail.com](mailto:sambaltzer12@gmail.com).

**“Auld Lang Syne”** is a Scots-dialect poem written by Robert Burns in 1788, and set to an old Scottish folk song. It is traditionally sung at the start of the new year, but also at funerals, commencements, and any time of auspicious transition. The lyrics ask the rhetorical question, “Should we forget all the great times we had together?” The implied answer is, “Of course not!” as these memories are to be treasured, even as we begin new chapters of our biography and look ahead to new adventures.

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