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presents...



Bryan Eckenrode
Conductor

Home for the Holidays!

Guest Artist:
Valerian
Ruminski,
Bass Vocalist



Works By:
Robert Wendel
Sergei Prokofiev
Leroy Anderson

December 3, 2023 | 3:00 pm

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Conductor's Corner:

GREETINGS!!!

Welcome to our 2023 holiday concert. It seems like we were just at the Island Park Summer concert.

As I write this, I'm hoping we will not have a blizzard in Buffalo as we did last year. Our neighborhood spent 5 days without heat or electricity. Our dogs finally agreed to wear the coats my wife had previously bought for them, which before the storm, they considered complete and utter punishment.

This year's concert is chock full of wonderful music, some of which you may not have heard before and some that will be very familiar. For example, the Troika, part IV of the Lieutenant Kije Suite by Prokofiev, was used on the 1995 Emerson Lake and Palmer recording: I Believe in Father Christmas. A Classical Christmas Suite by Wendel may remind you of other music you have heard but in a very different context. His Fantasia may not be familiar, but you will love its beautifully haunting textures.

The Amherst Symphony is very pleased to have Valerian Ruminski as our soloist. Originally from Buffalo, his stellar career takes him all over the world to critical acclaim. This afternoon Valerian performs the famous Colline aria from La Boheme, and The Trumpet Shall Sound heard yearly in Handel's Messiah, along with other holiday tunes.

And of course, we continue the Amherst tradition of Jingle Bells with the young people and the young at heart from our audience. The concert concludes with many holiday favorites inviting you all to sing along.

We, at the Amherst Symphony, are very glad you could join us this afternoon. We wish you a happy holiday season, safe travels, a wonderful New Year, and invite you to join us for our next concert in February!

Cheers!

Bryan Eckenrode

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Bryan Eckenrode, Conductor

1st Violins:

Joseph Buckle, Concertmaster
 Esha Blaggan
 Sarah Chang
 Donna Feldman
 Emma Hoffritz
 Merry Jeffers
 Libby Keller
 Gayle Kroetsch
 Janet Mazzio
 Jeff Mols
 Carrie Ricchiazzi
 Ellyn Sheffield
 David Spring

2nd Violins:

Laura Rusche, Principal
 Gabrielle Catalano
 Barney Colon
 Alicia DiVita
 Aubrey Garas
 Melissa Gould
 Laura Holt
 Michael Klucznik
 Grace LeVea
 Samantha MacNamara
 Phyllis Piazza
 Melissa Goldberg
 Melanie Rushton
 Erin Szymanski

Violas:

Martin Ederer, Principal
 Christina DiVita
 Madelyn Goldberg
 Adam Peterson
 Nicole Pierino
 Mary Pouli-Sosnowski
 Renee Roess
 Elizabeth Seward

Celli:

Allison Collins, Principal
 Peg Beyer
 Erin Eno
 Reggie Guo
 John Martell
 Jennifer Sandner
 Joseph Tronolone
 AnneMarie Will
 Ezra Zubow

Double Basses:

Gil Pease, Principal
 Jamie Baumgardt
 Brian DeJesus
 Bob Groves
 Vincent Tutino
 Mary DiCiocco
 Mo Han
 Vincent Tucciarone

Flutes:

August Grillo, Principal
 Michelle Russ

Piccolo:

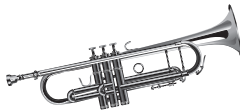
Eileen Brusino

Oboes:

Sheryl Rohr, Principal
 Erin Rush

Clarinets:

Lynne Price, Principal
 Keira Massey



Bass Clarinet:

Richard Nunemaker

Bassoons:

Susan Tichy, Principal
 Linda Mucyn

Alto Sax:

Craig Incontro
 David Manth

Tenor Sax:

Christopher Peracciny

French Horns:

Megan Marranca - Velez, Principal
 Lee Brusino
 David Macaluso
 Isaac Newman

Trumpets:

Don Montalto, Principal
 Kara Mayer
 Kyle Resnick
 Al Schlisserman

Trombones:

Robert King, Principal
 Peter Blackwell

Bass Trombone:

Stuart Easter

Tuba:

Jim Pace

Percussion:

Kris Banzhaf
 John Senall
 Colin Sperrazza
 Thomas Stroth
 Andrew Ziemba

Harp:

Beth Anne Breneman

Harpichord:

Jane Cary

Synthesizer/Piano:

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Personnel Director:

Lee Brusino



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Amherst Symphony Orchestra
 December 3, 2023 | 3:00 pm
Home for the Holidays!
 Bryan Eckenrode, Conductor
 Valerian Ruminski, Bass Vocalist

Lieutenant Kije Suite Op.60 Serge.....Sergei Prokofiev
 I. The Birth of Kije
 II. Romance
 III. The Wedding of Kije
 IV. Troika
 V. Interment of Kije

A Classical Christmas Suite.....Robert Wendel
 I. Overture to A Merry Christmas
 II. We Three Kings (So Unfinished Are...)
 III. Jingle Fourth
 IV. Little Bolero Boy

----- **INTERMISSION** -----

Fantasia on "Yeroushalaim Shel Zahav"Robert Wendel
 Vecchia zimarra, senti.....Giacomo Puccini
 From La Boheme
 The Trumpet Shall Sound.....George Frideric Handel
 From Messiah

Valerian Ruminski, Bass

Jingle Bells.....James Lord Pierpont
 Sleigh Ride.....Leroy Anderson
 White Christmas.....Irving Berlin
 Arr. Robert R. Bennett
 You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch.....Theodor "Dr. Seuss"
 Geisel and Albert Hague
 Arr. Scott Silbert and Bryan Kidd

Valerian Ruminski, Bass

A Christmas Festival.....Leroy Anderson

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BRYAN ECKENRODE, Conductor/Cellist

Conductor/cellist, Bryan Eckenrode, graduated cum laude from SUNY at Stony Brook and holds a Master of Music degree from SUNY at Buffalo.

Eckenrode is conductor and music director of the Warren Philharmonic Orchestra in Pennsylvania and the Chautauqua Regional Youth Symphony, the Prelude Strings Orchestra, and the Young Artists' Orchestra of Jamestown. He is also conductor of the Amherst Symphony. He has been guest conductor with the Western New York Chamber Orchestra. He was guest conductor of the Genesee Symphony and the Cheektowaga Symphony. He was also conductor of the Zone 1 Area All State Orchestra. Eckenrode served as the program coordinator for Artpark's Music in the Woods series.

He is currently principal cello with the Western New York Chamber Orchestra and has performed with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Erie Philharmonic, and with Ars Nova.

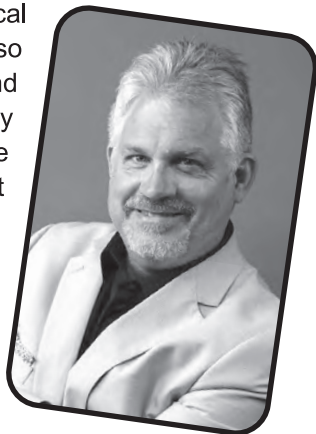
He is principal cello with the Bach and Beyond Festival and records with the International Baroque Soloists. He was principal cellist with the British Columbia (Canada) Mozart Festival Orchestra and the Southern Tier Symphony. He is a member of the Lexington String Quartet, and the chamber groups Voci d'Amore and Camerata.

He can be heard on the CDs of many artists, including Ani DiFranco, 10,000 Maniacs, Sixpence None the Richer, Seven Day Faith, Them Jazzebeards, John and Mary, and Alison Pipitone: not only as a cellist, but as a bagpiper and flutist. He has recorded the sound tracks of film scores for several silent movies being distributed on commercial DVD by the Turner Broadcasting Network. He has performed twice at Lincoln Center in New York and recorded the sound track for the PBS special – The Siege of Fort Erie – A Glorious Battle. He was bagpipe soloist with the Buffalo Philharmonic for their successful Memorial Day Pops Concerts. He has been principal cellist with The Most Arts Festival held at Alfred University. He was recently inducted into the Sigma Alpha Iota for his distinguished contribution to the arts.

Eckenrode is an adjunct professor at Canisius College, Buffalo State College, Jamestown Community College, and director of the string department at Villa Maria College. Eckenrode is on the music faculty at the renowned Nichols School in Buffalo. He is married to the internationally acclaimed soprano, Cristen Gregory.

Guest Artist: Valerian Ruminski

Valerian Ruminski is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and of SUNY-Buffalo. A true basso cantante, his bold and powerful vocal lyricism and remarkable coloratura have garnered him many accolades. An excellent musician and creative interpreter, he has performed with many of the great opera companies in the US and abroad including The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Dallas Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Miami Opera, Minnesota Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Ireland, Opera de Montreal, Opera de Monte Carlo, Birmingham Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Opera de Quebec, Vancouver Opera, The Canadian Opera Company, The Green Mountain Festival (VT) and Festival de Belle-ile en Mer (Fr). He can be heard on the Naxos label release of 'Night at the Opera' with other singers who have debuted at the Metropolitan Opera as well as on the newly released Victor Herbert Collection on New World Records.



Mr. Ruminski has performed the roles of Figaro & Bartolo (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Ferrando (*Il Trovatore*), Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Colline (*La Boheme*), Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), Feniscio (*Ermione*), Sarastro (*Magic Flute*), Sam (*Ballo in Maschera*), Ramphis & King (*Aida*), Zuniga (*Carmen*), Dr. Grenvil (*Traviata*), Prince Gremin (*Onegin*), Inspector Budd (*Albert Herring*), Lt. Ratcliffe (*Billy Budd*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), First Soldier (*Salome*), Daland (*The Flying Dutchman*), Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*), Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), Garibaldi (*Rodelinda*), II Re (*Ariodante*), Ligniere (*Cyrano*), Don Pasquale (*Don Pasquale*) and Basilio (*Barber of Seville*) among many others.

Mr. Ruminski is the recipient of many prestigious grants and awards including the Lincoln Center Martin Segal Award, a Richard Tucker Grant, a William Mattheus Sullivan Foundation Grant, a Gerda Lissner Foundation Grant, the 2000 MacAllister Award, winner of the NJ Verismo Competition, the NYSTA Coloratura Competition and the Marcella Sembrich Vocal Competition sponsored by the Kosciuszko Foundation.

Since 2009 Mr. Ruminski has been the Founder and General Director of the acclaimed Nickel City Opera in Buffalo NY and received an award from Opera America for 10 years of stewardship for the company as well as being Adjunct Professor of Voice at Westchester Community College in Valhalla NY.

Preconcert - St. Benedict School

St. Benedict School, one of the top-ranked private schools in WNY, is very excited to be part of the outreach program with the Amherst Symphony Orchestra! Our Sunrise Singers and Tiger Singers are in their second year with Ms. Rennicks and the Experienced Band Lesson Group has blossomed this past year with Miss Ellis from Paul Effman Music. With our program growing and getting better every day, we are thrilled to be performing for you today!

2nd ANNUAL \$3000 AUDREY C. HURD STRING SCHOLARSHIP SPECIFIC TO VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS

Audrey C. Hurd was a celebrated member of the Amherst Symphony for 46 years. Having grown up in a “family of strings”; both her mother and sister played violin, Audrey chose cello and continued to play during her four years at Albany State Teacher’s College. During the balance of her career in the Buffalo City High Schools, Audrey was a firm believer in music education of youth and began the School Outreach Program for ASO musicians to visit area schools to demonstrate their instruments. A dedicated volunteer of the Amherst Symphony Orchestra, as a musician, Association Board Director and Women’s Committee Past-President, the ASO is privileged to have Audrey Hurd’s family honor her with this Annual \$3000 String Scholarship.

Application Deadline: Saturday, February 17, 2024

For Requirements & Application Form:

See: Music Teachers & Guidance Counselors or Visit: amherstsymphony.com

2024 FASO/ROTARY SCHOLARSHIP

Information regarding the 2024 Music Scholarship sponsored by FASO (Friends of the Amherst Symphony Orchestra) and the Williamsville Rotary will once again be extended to all Town of Amherst High Schools, public and private. The scholarship is awarded to a senior who is planning to go on to be a music major. The award is given to a senior graduating from schools in the Town of Amherst or a senior who is related to a member of the Amherst Symphony. Information has been sent to the schools and symphony members about the requirements and location of auditions. This will be our 39th year of scholarships.

Application Deadline: Saturday, February 17, 2024

For Requirements & Application Form:

See: Music Teachers & Guidance Counselors or Visit: amherstsymphony.com

Message from the President

Joyeux Noël! Frohe Weihnachten! Feliz Navidad!

If you're celebrating the Festival of the Lights, Chag Hanukkah sameach!

And if you, like the Japanese, truly enjoy celebrating the New Year, Yoi otoshi o omukae kudasai.

I am a non-singer who loves singing Christmas music. So much so that I can often be heard in a rousing, if off-key, chorus of "We Three Kings" while doing laundry...In July. I believe the music which runs through the couple of months of these holiday preparations and celebrations is essential to the warmth, the joy, the pleasure of the season. Because you're here with us this afternoon to enjoy Holiday music, you probably feel much the same way.



But did you know that the seasonal music we each love most can vary by age, family traditions, and general musical interests. Even geography can play a role into what we listen. For example, traditionalists love "The Holly & The Ivy", country fans have a preference for Burl Ives' "A Holly, Jolly Christmas", and jazz aficionado's groove on "The Christmas Song" by Nat King Cole. Meanwhile in Australia, where Christmas is a summer holiday often celebrated at the beach with a barbecue meal, you will find the "Twelve Days of Christmas" revised to "12 parrots prattling, 11 numbats nagging, 10 lizards leaping, 9 wombats working, 8 dingoes digging, 7 possums playing, 6 brolgas dancing, 5 kangaroos, 4 koalas cuddling, 3 kookaburras laughing, 2 pink galahs, and an emu up a gum tree."

When the program for our holiday concerts are put together, we consider our multi-generational audience, the different faiths they bring to the concert hall, and of course the challenge of music that will engage our musicians. I must admit, we haven't spent enough time on geographical influences, but perhaps we should from now on!

As 2023 draws to a close, and we contemplate what 2024 will bring, I hope your challenges are few while your joys are many, your circle of family and friends is warm and loving, and that you'll continue join us at concerts, our Preview Luncheons, and in other ways to support your community's best music asset, The Amherst Symphony Orchestra.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claudia" with a decorative flourish at the end.

Claudia Staines
Acting President, ASOA

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PROGRAM NOTES

by Alexa Mathes

Lieutenant Kijé Suite

Sergei Prokofiev

1891 - 1953

With its energetic melodies and satirical slant, Sergei Prokofiev's Lieutenant Kijé Suite is one of his most famous works. Originally written as a film score, Prokofiev adapted five of the film's pieces into a suite in 1934.

Lieutenant Kijé the movie is based on Yury Tynyanov's novela of the same name. Set in 1800 in St. Petersburg, Russia, the story satirizes the rule of Emperor Paul I through a clerical error that led to the creation of an imaginary Lieutenant Kijé. As Harlow Robinson notes in his biography of the composer, Prokofiev was originally hesitant to write the score but ultimately chose to pursue the commission because it aligned with his own sense of humor.

Writing film music appealed to Prokofiev because of the vast audience the composer could reach, according to Robinson. Prokofiev would write more than thirty film scores in his lifetime, making him an iconic Soviet film composer along with Dmitri Shostakovich and Aram Khachaturian.

Born in a remote Ukrainian village in 1891 Prokofiev was an only child doted on by his mother. He began playing the piano at age six and later entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in 1904, remaining in Russia until the revolution of 1917. Then he lived as a composer and musician in the United States, Germany, and Paris, France. He eventually returned to the USSR in 1936, remaining there until his death three days after Joseph Stalin on March 5, 1953.

A Classical Christmas Suite Fantasia On Jerusalem Of Gold

Robert Wendel

1951 -

With a dual degree in chemistry and music, composer Robert Wendel has a knack for arranging musical favorites into festive pops pieces. Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Wendel studied privately with Leroy Anderson while a student at the University of Connecticut. After he received his master's he moved to New York City and joined the Radio City Music Hall orchestra as a musician and stand-by conductor.

In 1990, Wendel was touring as a conductor for Harry Connick Jr. when he founded his own **cont.**



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music publishing business. Since then, Wendel has composed or arranged dozens of pieces including “Fantasia On Jerusalem Of Gold,” which is based on an Israeli folk song. “A Classical Christmas Suite” weaves together recognizable classical pieces by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Schubert, Gustav Mahler, and Maurice Ravel into a light, holiday arrangement.

**Aria and Allegretto Moderato with Triste
La Boheme, with baritone/bass**

**Giacomo Puccini
1858 - 1924**

As one of the most performed operas ever, “La Boheme” has been deeply beloved since its 1896 debut. Written by Giacomo Puccini, the story centers around the love between bohemian writer Rodolfo and a young seamstress named Mimi. As with most operas, things don’t turn out happily--and Rodolfo’s bass solos are commanding in their own right.

It’s hard to imagine opera without Giacomo Puccini. Born into a family of musicians, Puccini lost his father--maestro di cappella of the Cattedrale di San Martino--at age six. Later supported by his uncles, Puccini entered the Milan Conservatory in 1880 and wrote his first opera in 1883. Puccini loved dramatic literature, which helped him develop an understanding of what works could be developed into operas. “La Boheme” is based on a book by Henri Murger, but also draws on periods of poverty in Puccini’s own life.

**Aria and The Trumpet Shall Sound
Messiah, with baritone/bass**

**George Frideric Handel
1685 - 1759**

The holiday season isn’t complete without listening to or seeing a performance of George Frideric Handel’s Messiah. The masterful oratorio, written in less than a month in 1741, premiered in Dublin, Ireland on April 13, 1742. Though it was an immediate success in Dublin and later in London, England--where Handel lived for most of his life--it was the United States that helped create the Messiah holiday performance tradition in the early 1800s.

The three-part structure of the piece details the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bass vocals throughout bring a rich warmth to the celebratory work. In an article for the New York Times, music critic Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim calls “The Trumpet Shall Sound” an emotional highlight of the Messiah, “charged with hope, mystery and awe.”

It’s thought that Handel himself quite liked the Messiah, having donated some proceeds of the Messiah premiere and later performances to various charities. He even attended a performance in London on April 6, 1759, eight days before he died.

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Jingle Bells**James Lord Pierpont**
1822 - 1893

It remains an unsettled question where and when James Lord Pierpont originally composed this quintessential holiday song. The city of Medford Massachusetts claims it was written at the Simpson Tavern in 1850, while the City of Savannah Georgia says he wrote it for the church where he was an organist, sometime later in the 1850s. Given that it was often sung at parties, a drinking song with tinkling ice in glasses used to simulate bells, perhaps the tavern story is the right one.

As to when, well 'Jingle Bells' was copyrighted in 1859, but has long since passed into public domain. And into our hearts, as a signal that the winter holiday season has arrived, ready to be celebrated and enjoyed

Sleigh Ride
A Christmas Festival**Leroy Anderson**
1908 - 1975

Leroy Anderson was a favored composer of Arthur Fiedler, legendary conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, who was very keen to have a large selection of what is often called light classical music or--and perhaps more accurately--classical pops.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1908 to Swedish immigrants, Anderson grew up in a musical family. He later went on to study with Walter Piston and Georges Enesco at Harvard University and became an active composer, local musician, and director of the Harvard band. The composer has a rich repertoire of music which has often been described as "accessible."

Though the piece was conceived during a heatwave in 1946, "Sleigh Ride" of course is inspired by winter. The Boston Pops premiered it in 1948. "A Christmas Festival,"--also written for the group--came in 1950, as an orchestration of several famous Christmas carols. We hope you enjoy singing along with us!

White Christmas, with baritone/bass**Irving Berlin**
1888 - 1989

Born in Imperial Russia, Israel Isidore Baline arrived in the United States in 1893, and while his family was rather poor, he always said he didn't grasp how poor because that was the only life his family had ever known. Berlin's first song published was call "Marie from Sunny Italy" for which he received 33 cents for the publishing rights. His first hit came in 1911 with "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Over the course of a 60-year career, Berlin wrote more than 1,500 songs, as well as the scores for 19 Broadway shows and 18 Hollywood films. It was in one of those films, "Holiday Inn," when Bing Crosby first introduced audiences to "White Christmas."

The simple lyrics, connecting childhood and home to the sweetness of Christmas, had
cont.

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Please Join Us! Post Concert Reception

FASO (Friends of the Amherst Symphony) cordially invite the conductor, orchestra members & concert attendees to celebrate their love of music & the Holiday Season by attending the post concert reception, to enjoy some fellowship, along with cookies & punch in the cafeteria.
Mitzie Serafin, FASO President

particular resonance for Americans in the winter of 1942 as millions of G.I.s were facing their first Christmas separated from their families. But for Berlin and his wife, who were both Jewish and thus did not celebrate Christmas, there was another kind of sadness to the December 25th date. In 1928, their three-week-old son died on Christmas, and they made it a point to visit his grave every year on the date.

Christmas has so many meanings, but this song seems to show it's mostly about family and belonging.

You're A Mean One Mr. Grinch, with baritone/bass

**Albert Hague
1920 - 2001**

Since it first aired as a TV special in 1966, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" has stolen our hearts every holiday season. Based on a book by Dr. Seuss, the author helped develop the TV adaptation, adding characters like Max the dog and giving the Grinch his iconic green hue. But perhaps the most endearing addition to the story is its famous song, "You're A Mean One Mr. Grinch," written by Albert Hague--a Broadway composer who escaped Nazi Germany.

Born Albert Marcuse in Berlin, Germany in 1920. Albert's family was Jewish and so he and his mother escaped to Rome, Italy in 1937. Soon after, he was adopted by Elliott B. Hague, an eye surgeon, so he could attend the College of Music in Cincinnati, Ohio on a scholarship. Graduating in 1942, Hague eventually went on to win a Tony award for the musical score for "Redhead," in 1959.

To get the Seuss gig, Hague insisted that the author visit him at his house where he could play on his own piano. Suess was hooked as soon as he heard Hague slide an octave on the word "Grrrrriiinch!", according to a 2001 interview in 2001 with editor Deb Rieselman.



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