



Smithsonian Associates

Classical Sounds of Christmas

with Dr. Rachel Franklin

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET

From sleigh bells and sugarplums to the mystical beauties of the Nativity, every December our senses are filled with the music of Christmas. In this 2-session celebration of the festive season, popular speaker and concert pianist **Dr. Rachel Franklin** explores how classical Western composers created a canon of both secular and sacred experiences that are now deeply rooted in our collective seasonal expectations.

Some of this music is ancient and folk-based, some grandly Baroque, and more recent masterpieces have evoked images of feasting, bells, snowy Christmas trees, brightly colored candy, and jolly red Santas. Enjoy the stories behind works by such composers as Bach, Handel, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Berlioz, Britten, Vaughan Williams, William Henry Fry and many others.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

Dec. 12 A Christmas Box of Musical Delights

Leopold Mozart and Sergei Prokofiev take us on jingling sleigh rides to the glittering holiday magic of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Christmas Eve Suite*, while snowy landscapes by Florence Price and Franz Liszt are a poignant contrast to the pain of Debussy's *Christmas for Children*. William Henry Fry gives Santa Claus a symphony all his own and, of course, we finish with Tchaikovsky's incomparable *Nutcracker*, and Ellington and Strayhorn's swinging homage to that most famous Christmas ballet.

Works explored, media used:

Johann Georg Leopold Mozart, 1719-1787

Die Musikalische Schlittenfahrt (Musical Sleigh Ride), 1755

Ensemble Eduard Melkus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4gWDMMWUYE>

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, 1844-1908

Christmas Eve Suite, 1903

- Ernest Ansermet, L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xghS8ixK5E>

Sergei Prokofiev, 1891-1953

Troika, Lieutenant Kijé, score and film, director Alexander Feinzimmer, 1934

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nbb539QZZXo>

Franz Liszt, 1811-1886

Weihnachtsbaum (Christmas Tree) S.186, No.6 Carillon, 1881 final version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LdUf1eOipc>

William Henry Fry, 1813-1864

Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony, 1853

- Tony Rowe, Royal Scottish National Symphony Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSMeeYz0iwU>

Florence Price, 1887-1953

Song for Snow

- University of Arkansas Schola Cantorum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UTYFnJqRow>

Edward Elgar, 1857-1934

A Christmas Greeting, Op. 52, 1907

- Roy Massey, Hereford Cathedral Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UT3RAzoRcwI>

Claude Debussy, 1862-1918

Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison, for voice and piano, L 139, 1915

- Young Voices Toronto, Amici Chamber Ensemble
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nPQNnVdltc>

Piotr Tchaikovsky, 1840-1893

The Nutcracker, 1892

- New York City Ballet: Dance of the Flowers, Ashley Bouder
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKcZL8q1eBw>
- Bolshoi Ballet: Sugar Plum Fairy, Nina Kaptsova
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Wz4cG5phfA>
- Post:ballet: Waltz of the Snowflakes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru5H3LHiU1M>

Duke Ellington, 1899-1974, Billy Strayhorn, 1915-1967

Nutcracker Suite, 1960

- Promo film, Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcHRuMujI0I>

Danse of the Floreadores

- Duke Ellington & His Orchestra
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_muBaJdx8AU