



Smithsonian Associates

Classical Sounds of Christmas

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Thursday, December 5, 2024 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. ET

For the 2024 holiday season popular speaker and concert pianist **Rachel Franklin** revisits this most beloved seasonal repertory, hand-picking additional selections to explore how classical Western composers created a canon of both secular and sacred experiences that are now deeply rooted in our collective seasonal expectations. From sleigh bells and sugarplums to the mystical beauties of the Nativity, every December our senses are filled with the music of Christmas. 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, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, Francisco Guerrero, Rimsky-Korsakov, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Humperdinck, 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. 5 A Christmas Box of Musical Delights

Leopold Mozart and Prokofiev take us on jingling sleigh rides, while snowy landscapes by Florence Price and Jan Sibelius complement the glittering holiday magic of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Christmas Eve Suite*. Howard Blake and Debussy

provide unique children's visions of winter and as for Santa Claus, William Fry gives him a symphony of his own. 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>

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=8LdUfleOIpc>

Jan Sibelius, 1865-1957

On hanget korkeat, nietokset, (*We have snowdrifts piled high*)

- Turku University Choir & Collegium Musicum Turku

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbsvOLS7sEk>

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, 1844-1908

Christmas Eve Suite, 1903

- Ernest Ansermet, L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xghS8ixK5E>

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>

Howard Blake, 1938

The Snowman, 1982

- Sinfonia of London
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A3THighARU>

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**

- 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