

**Program Notes written by Arcadia Orchestra Blog Team members:**

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Thank you for reading!

Read below for further background information for all the orchestras tonight to gain a better understanding and appreciation for the pieces!

**Arcadia High School Premier Orchestra**

*Spinning Song*

By Albert Ellmenreich (1816-1905) arr. Ralph Ford

With its syncopated, catchy melody, this cheerful piece depicts the rhythmic hum of a spinning wheel, a device often used to spin yarn during the composer's time. Though originally written for piano, this piece has been arranged for strings, featuring a variety of techniques to listen for, such as slurs and pizzicato.

*"Care Selve" from Atalanta*

By George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) arr. Gerald R. Doan

Originally written for a royal wedding in 1736, *Atalanta* is a pastoral opera that tells the story of the titular heroine from Greek mythology. Atalanta is a woman unafraid to hunt with other men and surpass them in athletic events, while her love interest, Meleagro, is similarly drawn to the wilderness and outdoors. Played in Act I of this opera, "Care Selve" translates to "dear woods" in Italian and emphasizes the solace of nature. An appreciation for nature is reinforced by this aria's slow, sweet melodies and swelling crescendos and decrescendos.

*Frosty the Snowman*

By Steve Nelson (1907-1981) & Jack Rollins (1915-2015) arr. Carrie Lane Gruselle

This classic holiday song is a favorite for all ages and follows the adventures of Frosty, a snowman brought to life by a group of children who must leave them at the end of winter. Now played by a string orchestra, this iconic piece features a lighthearted, familiar melody and a finale that uses swing rhythms reminiscent of jazz music. In addition to strings, this arrangement also makes use of sleigh bells and a ride cymbal to add to the piece's holiday cheer.

*Jingle All the Way*

By James Lord Pierpont (1822-1893) arr. Victor Lopez

Audiences may recognize the melody to "Jingle Bells" in this holiday classic, but this time, it's played with a unique swing rhythm to give it a jazzy twist! The piece also features parts for the

drums and piano and includes familiar, upbeat melodies that beckons its listeners into the spirit of the holiday season.

### **Arcadia High School String Orchestra**

#### *Il Re Pastore*

By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) arr. Deborah Baker Monday

Translated to “The Shepherd King,” *Il Re Pastore* is an opera centered around the search for the rightful ruler of the ancient kingdom of Sidon. The main character, a young shepherd named Aminta, must make the impossible choice between true love and accepting his role on the throne. Composed in 1775, Mozart was only nineteen years old, the piece is instilled with feelings of youthful excitement and exuberance. Played at a lively *molto allegro* tempo, utilizing techniques such as tremolo, and including rapid changes in the dynamics, this piece invigorates its audience with its energetic nature.

#### *Orchid*

By Yukiko Nishimura (1967- )

The beginning of this piece directs its players to play *espressivo* (or “expressively”) to convey its warm, lyrical feeling. Towards the middle, the piece suddenly springs into the action, leaping into an *animato* style and with darker harmonies. The agitation heightens, crescendoing into a climax, then slows down into a tranquil relief as the theme returns. Composer Yukiko Nishimura dedicated this heartfelt piece to her late mentor, Atsutada Otaka, who grew orchids in his plastic greenhouse in addition to being a renowned Japanese composer.

#### *Hava Nagila*

Traditional

Played once before by Arcadia High School in 2016, this Jewish folk song once again returns to the Performing Arts Center stage. Originating as a *nigun* – or wordless melody – in eastern Europe, it has since been traditionally played at festivities such as weddings and bar/bat mitzvahs. The words “hava nagila” translates to “let us rejoice” in Hebrew, with the song’s catchy melody indeed beckoning its listeners to celebrate and be joyous. In particular, this arrangement for string orchestra features multiple soloists and percussion parts.

### **Arcadia High School Concert Orchestra**

#### *“Prelude” from Concerto Grosso No. 1*

By Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

As the first movement, “Prelude” opens Ernest Bloch’s *Concerto Grosso No. 1* with a burst of energy. The piece only intensifies from there, with emphasis on techniques such as accents and

*marcato* that contribute to its sharp, biting notes. Featuring a piano obbligato, *Concerto Grosso No. 1* was published in 1925 and would be the first of Bloch's two published concerto grossos.

Ernest Bloch is often considered one of Switzerland's greatest composers and utilized neo-classical and neo-romantic influences in his music. His most acclaimed works include *Schelomo* and *From Jewish Life*.

### *Angelus*

By Franz Lizst (1811-1886)

*Angelus'* full name is *Angelus! Priere aux Anges Gardiens*, which translates to "Angelus! Prayer to the Guardian Angels." Indeed, this piece's slow, moving melodies evoke the solemn but hopeful feelings that come with a prayer. This expressive piece starts out soft, then crescendos and grows in intensity, not unlike a prayer becoming increasingly passionate. Eventually, the violins bring the piece to a high-pitched climax, followed by a soft, heartfelt ending. The piece was first included as a part of Lizst's *Anées de pèlerinage*, a set of three suites published in 1842, and was composed around the feast day of the Holy Angels.

### "Dance of the Tumblers" from *The Snow Maiden*

By Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) arr. Todd Parish

Premiering in 1882, *The Snow Maiden* follows the titular character, daughter of the mythological King Frost and Spring Beauty, during the struggles of a long, harsh winter. Throughout the opera, the Snow Maiden experiences the ups and downs of love, but ultimately sacrifices herself to herald the beginning of spring. Featured in Act III, "Dance of the Tumblers" is a fast, energetic piece inspired by the dances of the *skomorokhi*, or Russian street performers. Its lighthearted, yet invigorating melodies reflect the whimsy of the acrobats and clowns featured in the opera scene when it is played.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was a Russian composer and member of "The Five," an influential circle of composers dedicated to Russian music. His other notable works include the *Scheherazade* suite and the opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (which includes "The Flight of the Bumblebee," another fast-paced piece).

## **Arcadia High School Symphony Orchestra**

### "Pastorale and Rustic Dances" from *Concerto Grosso No. 1*

By Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

The Arcadia High School Symphony Orchestra continues Bloch's *Concerto Grosso No. 1* with the third movement from the suite. As opposed to "Prelude," "Pastorale and Rustic Dances" starts more slowly, incorporating gentle melodies characteristic of pastoral music. The piece is interspersed with faster melodies that eventually culminate in an animated section, hearkening

back to dances in the old countryside. Towards the end, the piece returns to its original tempo but again finishes the movement with a joyous celebration.

“Trepak” and “Waltz of the Flowers” from *Nutcracker Suite*  
By Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

A holiday favorite since its premier in 1892, *The Nutcracker* is a ballet that tells the story of a girl named Clara as she follows an enchanted nutcracker prince into the whimsical Kingdom of the Sweets on Christmas Eve. “Trepak” is a character piece featured in Act II of the opera, and is based on a traditional Ukrainian folk dance. Played at an upbeat tempo, the piece brims with energy and instills a sense of excitement in its listeners.

The iconic “Waltz of the Flowers” also takes place in Act II, during the final dance, where Clara and the prince are celebrated by the benevolent Sugar Plum Fairy. The piece opens with a quiet, mystical feel, and builds up to a joy-filled celebration that ends the ballet on a high note.

Beloved for their lighthearted natures, “Trepak” and “Waltz of the Flowers” have been featured throughout various forms of media. Most notably, both pieces have been animated in Disney’s 1940 film *Fantasia*.

“So This is the Great and Wide Sea” from *Mosaic for Earth*  
By Dwight Bigler (1973 - )

“May we come to a greater understanding of our influence on this planet, remember our duty as moral beings, and be better neighbors to all life on Earth.” – Dwight Bigler

Featuring two hundred and fifty musicians upon its world premier in 2022, *Mosaic for Earth* aims to instill an appreciation for nature in its audience and bring awareness to human impact on the environment. A winner of the 2023 American Prize in Composition, the piece is composed for both orchestra, band, and choir, sung by Arcadia High School’s Chanteurs.

Adapted from Psalm 104:25-29, “So This is the Great and Wide Sea” is the eighth out of *Mosaic for Earth*’s fourteen movements. It depicts the sea as teeming with life, with creatures “great and small” living in a delicate balance. The orchestra opens the piece with light, quick melodies, followed by the choir singing of the wonders of the ocean.

Composer Dwight Bigler cited his observation of the biodiversity found in Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains as inspiration for this piece. Upon learning of the fast extraction of resources from areas such as these, Bigler felt the need to compose something that would drive others to protect the beauty of the environment reflected in his piece. Dr. Bigler was one of Ms. Chen’s conducting professors when she was in graduate school and introduced this new work to her. Currently, Bigler serves as the Director of Choral Activities at Virginia Tech and Music Director of the Blacksburg Master Chorale.

*Joy to the World*

By George Frederic Handel (1685-1759) arr. Dan Forrest

*Joy to the World* has long been a favorite around the holidays, reflecting the hope and rejoicing celebrated in festivities. The Arcadia High School Chanteurs and Concert Choir accompany the Arcadia High School Symphony Orchestra in this carol depicting the second coming of Christ. The carol's lyrics were first written in 1719 by English clergyman and hymnist Isaac Watts after paraphrasing Psalm 98. Later on, George Frederic Handel composed a tune along to the lyrics, and an arrangement that used portions from Handel's *Messiah* was then written by American composer Lowell Mason. The arrangement you hear tonight differs from the original *Joy to the World*, in that it is a Celtic arrangement, which borrows from traditional Irish music. Ultimately, *Joy to the World* has remained a popular holiday hymn throughout its long history and many arrangements. If you enjoy Celtic music, you won't want to miss the Celtic-themed Orchestra Benefit Dinner this year on March 8th!