Holiday Happening
December 14, 2025 4:00 P.M.
Concordia University Chapel of Our Lord

Valses nobles et sentimentales   **Maurice Ravel**
                                                          (1875-1937)

Nutcracker Suite   **P.I. Tchaikovsky**
                                                          (1840-1893)

- **Danses caractéristiques: Marche - Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy - Russian Dance (Trepak) - Arabian Dance - Chinese Dance – Dance of the Reed-Flutes**
- **Waltz of the Flowers**

intermission
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L'Arlésienne Suites No. 1 and 2   **Georges Bizet**
                                                          (1838-1875)

Medley of Well-Known Carols   **Arthur Harris**
                                                          (1927-1992)

Maurice Boyer, conductor

Today's concert is being performed in memory of

Like several other scores by **Maurice Ravel** that became ballets, *Valses nobles et sentimentales* was initially a work for piano. The waltzes of Franz Schubert were a key inspiration to its composition. Ravel specifically cited two collections of Schubert dances that had been published separately in 1823: *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales*. The German root for "waltz" (walzen) means, literally, "to roll," and is related to the Latin word volvere (to turn, rotate). The potential contained within this deceptively simple, straightforward dance type fascinated Ravel. In 1906, he had begun working on a project that set out to discern the essence of the waltz, which eventually culminated in the famous *La Valse* (similarly beginning as music for the keyboard but later taking the form of a "choreographic poem" for orchestra).

Ravel was asked by the Russian dancer Natasha Trouhanova to orchestrate his *Valses nobles et sentimentales* piano suite to create a short ballet for her ensemble. The ballet takes place in a Parisian courtesan's salon in the 1820s (the decade of Schubert's compositions). The ballet faded into oblivion, but Ravel's music has lived on in the concert hall. Claude Debussy is only the most famous admirer of the nuanced, exquisitely detailed orchestration of Ravel's score. Comprising seven dances and an epilogue, *Valses nobles et sentimentales* manifest what Ravel later described as "a markedly clearer kind of writing which crystallizes the harmony and sharpens the profile of the music." The waltzes unfold as a series of effective contrasts in mood, tempo, dynamics, and even rhythmic variation against the underlying basic pulse in triple meter. The epilogue recalls fragments of the preceding dances.

Tchaikovsky wrote three ballets, all of them now very famous, *Swan Lake* (1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1888), and *The Nutcracker* (1892). In the story of *The Nutcracker* by E.T.A. Hoffman, Young Clara Stahlbaum is given a nutcracker doll with the appearance of a prince by her godfather (and a magician), Drosselmeyer, at a Christmas party. After midnight, with nearly everyone asleep, the doll transforms into the prince it had formerly been, and Clara aids him in defeating the mouse king who had threatened to take over the house.

Except for the March, an exciting profusion of fanfares and swirling strings. the selections from the **Nutcracker** Suite are from Act 2, in the Prince's Land of Sweets, where they journey before Clara returns home. The Sugar-Plum Fairy welcomes them (she had ruled in the

Prince's absence), and there is a sequence of dances representing exotic lands. The Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy introduces the newly invented celesta for the first time in orchestral music. It is followed by Trepak - a fast and furious Russian folk-dance. The Arabian Dance is slow, sinuous, and exotic (and more than a touch erotic, as anyone who has seen the Disney movie *Fantasia* is aware). The Chinese Dance, full of flute flourishes, is followed by the Dance of the Reed Flutes. The suite concludes with the famous Waltz of the Flowers - brimming with grace and elegance, Tchaikovsky's most inspired foray into the form of the French Valse.

L'Arlésienne (*The woman from Arles*) is incidental music composed by **Georges Bizet** for Alphonse Daudet's drama of the same name. It was first performed on September 30, 1872 at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris. The full score is not often performed now in its original form. However, the two suites for orchestra have become some of Bizet's most popular compositions.

The drama is set on the Rhône river, in Camargue, south of Arles, in southwestern Provence. To help give the composition Provençal color, Bizet used three existing tunes from a folk/traditional music featuring the tambourin (a Provençal drum), combined ingeniously with March of the Kings in the *Farandole* at the climax of the drama.

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1

Bizet was assured that the best numbers from the incidental music, arranged for a full symphony orchestra, would be successful in the concert hall. He initially planned a five-movement suite but settled on four movements as follows: *Prélude – Minuetto – Adagietto -- Carillon.*

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1 became so popular that the publisher commissioned a second set in 1879, four years after Bizet's death at the age of 36. His friend Ernest Guiraud is claimed to have arranged the other three large scale movements, as well as adding a minuet from *Scènes bohémiennes*, a suite of material originally composed for Bizet's 1866 opera *La jolie fille de Perth*. The resulting four-movement suite is as follows: *Pastorale – Intermezzo – Minuet – Farandole.*

Arthur Harris was an American composer and arranger known for his versatile work in Broadway, jazz, and concert music, notably his arrangements of Christmas carols and classical pieces. *A Medley of Well-Known Carols* is a popular orchestral arrangement featuring the classic Christmas tunes *Good King Wenceslas, Silent Night, Joy to the World, The First Noel, Deck the Halls, What Child Is This?, and We Wish You a Merry Christmas.* It offers a wonderful opportunity for a sing-along by the audience!

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night,
tho' the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
gath'ring winter fuel.

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in Heavenly peace!
sleep in Heavenly peace!

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

THE FIRST NOEL

The first "Noel" the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel! Noel! Noel! Noel!
Born is the King of Israel!

DECK THE HALLS

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.
Toll the ancient Yule tide carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

WHAT CHILD IS THIS

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping,
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

We wish you a Merry Christmas,
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin.
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.