

Arizona Philharmonic presents
Phoenix Brass Collective
December 7, 2025
The Brilliance of Brass
Directed by Dr. Jeff Quamo
Program notes by J. Michael Allsen

For this festive holiday program, we welcome maestro **Dr. Jeff Quamo** and the **Phoenix Brass Collective**. Arizona Philharmonic's principal trumpet, **Joshua Haake**, is a cofounder of this group, and two seated AZ Phil members join the group this evening, second trumpet **Stephen Martin**, and principal timpanist **Maria Flurry**. Phoenix Brass Collective member French hornist **Martha Sharpe** is also a regular on AZ Phil's stage.

The program includes a series of enjoyable arrangements of Christmas carols and Holiday songs by Roger Harvey, Michael Allen, Brian Sadler, Mark Freeh, and Christopher Mowat, and two colorful, original compositions by Anthony DiLorenzo.

The origin of the familiar *O Come, All Ye Faithful* (*Adeste fidelis*) was long a mystery. This hymn was known from at least the middle of the 18th century in both its original Latin and in several English translations. The hymn was attributed to medieval poets, various Portuguese and English writers—and even Handel—but the true author was not discovered until the 1940s: an 18th-century English Catholic named **John Francis Wade**. Wade fled religious persecution in England and spent most of his career in Flanders and France, selling Catholic service books. His Latin hymn *Adeste fidelis* was written sometime in the early 1740s. There have been many English translations, but the familiar English version was written by Francis Oakley in 1906 for *The English Hymnal*. Though hymn-writer **George Ratcliffe Woodward** penned the words to *Ding Dong Merrily on High* in 1924, he searched much earlier for the melody: it was originally a tune included in a 16th-century dance manual, **Thoinot Arbeau's** *Orchesographie* (1588) intended to be played with a circle-dance called the bransle. (**Note:** in case you were wondering about Thoinot Arbeau's unusual name, it is actually an anagram: a pseudonym for the actual writer, Jehan Tabouret, a 68-year-old French priest!) Englishman **John Rutter's** distinctive musical style, together with his skill as choral conductor have made him a familiar name in the world of choral music. His *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*, written while he was in school in the early 1970s, is one of the most popular of his many Christmas carols. Its melody is a jazzy syncopated tune that accompanies a host of people “on the way to Bethlehem.”

The next two carols have their roots in the lush countryside of the English county of Sussex, on the coast of the English channel, south of London. The *Sussex Mummers' Carol* is tied to the ancient English tradition of mummers: bands of masked and elaborately costumed singers who serenaded homes during the holiday season. This tune was originally collected in Sussex in 1881 by **Lucy Broadwood**. It was popularized in 1905 in an arrangement by **Percy Grainger**. This lush, lyrical tune is a great favorite of British brass bands. The *Sussex Carol* (*On Christmas Night All Christians Sing*) is much better-known in this country. Its text was first published in 1684 by an Irish bishop, Luke Waddinge, though it is possible that Waddinge merely printed a text already in circulation. The carol was certainly part of the folk tradition in Britain, and it circulated with a few different melodies. The now-universal tune associated with the *Sussex Carol* was transcribed in about 1900 by the English song-collector **Cecil Sharp** and his student **Ralph Vaughan Williams**. Vaughan Williams heard this melody from a woman in Sussex, and he published it as the *Sussex Carol* in 1919. The anonymous *Coventry Carol* was written in 16th-century England. It was originally part of a “mystery play”—a religious play staged by local trade guilds in the city of Coventry. Mystery plays often included musical interludes, and *The Coventry Carol* was originally part of a play dramatizing the nativity story from the Gospel of Matthew. It begins as a soothing lullaby.

The traditional Basque carol *Gabriel's Message* is based upon a much earlier Latin chant. The avid folksong collector, novelist, and Anglican priest **Sabine Baring-Gould** published the English translation heard here in the early 20th century. This carol is a gentle retelling of the Annunciation story: the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Next is the lively 16th-century *villancico* (carol) *Riu, riu, chíu*. Its refrain may refer to a traditional call of Catalan shepherds as they guard their flocks. This Christmas song has been attributed to **Matteo Flecha**, a Catalan composer who served in several Spanish and Mexican churches. It is among the most well-known works of the Spanish Renaissance: including a 1967 recording by the Monkees!

Director Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) is certainly one of the most imaginative—and creepiest—holiday movies ever. It tells the story of Jack Skellington, the Pumpkin King of Halloween Town, who has grown bored with the routine of scaring the wits out of people once a year. Jack stumbles on Christmas Town, and, without ever actually understanding anything about Christmas, engineers a hostile takeover by the creepy forces of Halloween. No worries—it all works out well in the end: Jack saves Santa and Christmas itself, finds true love, and brings a little snowy Christmas to Halloween Town. The score was by **Danny Elfman**, who also provided the singing voice for Jack. Elfman has worked with Burton on 18 films to date and they share a distinctly “weird” (as Elfman puts it) aesthetic. The medley heard here brings together several of *Nightmare's* spooky moments.

Trumpeter and composer **Anthony DiLorenzo** trained at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute and later worked with Leonard Bernstein at the Tanglewood Center. As a performer, he has appeared as a trumpet soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, and New York Philharmonic, and has held positions with the Philadelphia Orchestra, New World Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, and Utah Symphony. Also active in chamber music, DiLorenzo had a long tenure with the City Center Brass Quintet, one of America's leading brass ensembles. As a composer, he has extensive television and film credits and has won an Emmy award for his television work. His concert music has been performed by several major orchestras and chamber ensembles across the country. DiLorenzo composed *Baltazar, a King's Journey* in 2002, for the Carmel Music Society, to celebrate the Spanish heritage of the city of Monterey California. It is inspired by one of the three biblical wise men who follow a star to Bethlehem to honor the newborn Jesus. It opens with a forceful fanfare and launches into sweeping music. After a drum interlude, the low brass introduce a livelier new theme. The final section begins with a slow, trudging processional that accelerates—as if the wise men are excitedly reaching the end of their journey—before a joyous, closing fanfare.

Home Alone was the hit of the holiday season in 1990. This movie, pitting young Kevin (Macauley Culkin) against a pair of bumbling burglars was an enjoyable blend of sentimentality and slapstick nastiness. The eminent film composer **John Williams** wrote music for *Home Alone*, and his score features just the right mixture of naïve sweetness and naughtiness. Williams's *Setting the Trap* accompanies an on-screen montage of the ever-resourceful Kevin planting a whole series of nasty booby traps around his house for the burglars. This music is generally upbeat, with witty allusions to Christmas tunes and other themes from the film score, though there is always an undertone of threat and worry.

In that invaluable musicological resource *The Guinness Book of World Records*, *White Christmas* by **Irving Berlin** long held the title of largest-selling record in history. (It was not edged out until 1997, when Elton John's *Goodbye English Rose*—his tribute to Princess Diana—topped the charts.) The song was introduced in 1942, when millions of war-weary Americans heard **Bing Crosby** croon it for the first time in the movie *Holiday Inn*. It won an Academy Award, and Crosby's hit recording made him a wealthy man...and made Irving Berlin an even wealthier man! Berlin, who was never a particularly modest man, reportedly told his secretary that “Not only is it the best song I ever wrote, it's the best one *anybody* ever wrote.”

Anthony DiLorenzo describes his *The Toymaker* as a suite in three movements that “imagines three episodes in the life of the mythical **Greek inventor Daedalus** and his introduction to the mysterious **Saint Nicholas**.” He provides the following note:

The Toymaker tells a tale of St. Nicholas and his encounter with the mythical and wondrous inventor Daedalus. This music is far from your typical holiday fluff. *The Toymaker* has a style similar to Prokofiev and carries an edge and flare that propels the audience into the 21st century. The first movement introduces us to Daedalus while the music underscores his latest invention. Atop a high hill on the southern coast of Greece appears a clunky mass of steel, gears, bolts and gizmos, much like a craft out of a Jules Verne novel. Daedalus sets his craft in motion down this hill hurtling out of control towards his captive audience. As the ship started to break apart, or so it seemed, wings sprang out from its sides and the mass of metal soared over all the spectators’ heads as they looked on in awe. The second and third movements develop the relationship with St. Nicholas who later becomes good friends with Daedalus. More miraculous inventions are made until the conclusion of the suite when an amazing flying sled is made for Nicholas.

The opening movement, *The Golden Palace*, is a perfect musical picture of Daedalus’s clanking, steampunk contraption as it lumbers down the hill, and eventually takes flight. *The Magic Clock* depicts “a giant magical clock tower, where people, animals, and fantastic creatures make up this magnificent creation.” The music seamlessly blends a whole series of ideas, from twittering trumpets to a broad theme heard near the end. The final movement, *The Bells of Greece and St. Nicholas Takes Flight* “imagines Daedalus creating a magnificent sled for his friend St. Nicholas to carry presents to all the children he has befriended.” Opening with bell-themes that represent a whole series of amazing gadgets cooked up in the workshop of Daedalus, it ends with a broad theme representing the magical sleigh.

The well-known *Christmas Song* (*Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire*), with all of those cozy wintertime images, was actually written during the roasting heat of a California summer. In his autobiography, **Mel Tormé** related the story how in July 1945, he drove to the home of his lyricist and collaborator **Robert Wells** in Toluca Lake. He found the lyrics lying on the piano, and when Wells finally appeared sweating and hot even in shorts and a t-shirt, he told Tormé: “It was so damn hot today, I thought I’d write something to cool myself off. All I could think of was Christmas and cold weather.” Tormé replied: “You know, this just might make a song...” *The Christmas Song* was written in about 45 minutes later that day. Tormé quickly showed the song to his friend Nat Cole, whose 1946 hit recording is now a beloved holiday classic.

The concert ends with *Festive Cheer*, a bright medley of familiar holiday songs: *Sleigh Ride*, *Jingle Bells*, *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*.

Program notes © 2025 by J. Michael Allsen

Dr. Jeff Quamo, Conductor

Dr. Jeff Quamo holds a DMA in clarinet performance from **Arizona State University**, where he studied with Dr. Robert Spring, recipient of the International Clarinet Association's highest honor. His former teachers include Kenneth Grant (Rochester Philharmonic/Eastman School of Music) and jazz legend Eddie Daniels. He is the director of bands at **Chandler High School** and director of the **Phoenix Brass Collective**. He also serves as adjunct faculty at **Mesa Community College**, and as director of the **Scottsdale Concert Band** and the **Youth Symphony of the Southwest**. He has been an educational advocate for chamber music by serving as Chair for the AMEA State Solo & Ensemble Festival since 2016, and is a regular guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator. Through his educational efforts, he has been acknowledged by AMEA as a recipient of the **O.M. Hartsell Excellence in Teaching Music** Award in 2022 and the **George C Wilson Leadership / Service Award** in 2025.

Dr. Quamo maintains an active professional performing career as a clarinetist with the **Symphony of the Southwest** and **ZAZU West**. He has performed with the **Arizona Opera**, the **Phoenix Symphony**, and other Valley orchestras. He has performed as a guest soloist with jazz bands, brass bands, and orchestras across the nation. In 2016 he performed on Season 11 of **America's Got Talent with Cinematic Pop**. Jeff currently resides in Gilbert with his wife, Jaclyn, and their 5 children.



PROGRAM

JOHN FRANCIS WADE *O Come, All Ye Faithful*, arr. Roger Harvey

ARBEAU/RATCLIFFE *Ding Dong Merrily on High*, arr. Roger Harvey

JOHN RUTTER *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*, arr. Roger Harvey

TRADITIONAL ENGLISH *Sussex Mummers' Carol*, arr. Michael Allen

TRADITIONAL ENGLISH *Sussex Carol*, arr. Roger Harvey

ANON. (16TH CENTURY) *Coventry Carol*, arr. Roger Harvey

TRADITIONAL BASQUE *Gabriel's Message*, arr. Roger Harvey

MATEO FLECHA *Ríu, ríu, chíu*, arr. Roger Harvey

DANNY ELFMAN *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, arr. Brian Sadler

Intermission

ANTHONY DILORENZO *Baltazar, a King's Journey*

JOHN WILLIAMS *Setting the Trap* from *Home Alone*, arr. Brian Sadler

IRVING BERLIN *White Christmas*, arr. Mark Freeh

ANTHONY DILORENZO *The Toymaker*

The Golden Palace

The Magic Clock

The Bells of Greece and St. Nicholas Takes Flight

TORMÉ/WELLS *The Christmas Song*, arr. Christopher Mowat

VARIOUS *Festive Cheer*, arr. Roger Harvey

Sleigh Ride

Jingle Bells

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

We Wish You a Merry Christmas