

# MSU Youth Chorale joins symphony for concert

Bridgette Redman, For the Lansing State Journal 11:27 a.m. EST December 12, 2014



(Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

On the first Christmas, so the story goes, angels filled the sky singing "Hallelujah, glory in the highest." Ever since, people around the world have celebrated the season with music that expresses emotions, cultures, and a longing for the miraculous.

"The shared experience of singing or listening to religious or secular Christmas music binds us together," said David Rayl, director of choral programs at Michigan State University. "It's the most community building holiday in the United States, maybe true all over Western Europe. It's about family and community and music is an important part of that ritual. Ritual, in order to be effective, has to be familiar. There is comfort in listening to the same music every year."

Which perhaps explains why the Holiday Pops concert, conducted by Timothy Muffitt, is one of the most popular concerts the Lansing Symphony Orchestra holds all year. It features side-by-side performances with high school students performing Tchaikovsky's "Suite from the Nutcracker" along with the regular symphony members. Other numbers will include holiday favorites such as "O Holy Night," "The First Noel," "Let It Snow," and "We Three Kings."

The symphony also is joined by baritone Jonathan Beyer and the MSU Youth Chorale, providing vocals to the holiday classics.

Music is such an important part of the holiday that few can picture a Christmas without it.

"I have a feeling it would be a tradition that had faded out," said Kris Koop Ouellette, a Wharton Center employee who spent several years performing in "Phantom of the Opera" on Broadway. "So much of our storytelling that lasts gets told through music. Music is so individual, for this holiday that gets celebrated by the world, it is so personal and representative of the nation you come from. I cannot imagine Christmas without music."

The Sunday concert starts out with a mini concert at 2:20 p.m. by Suzuki students from Community Music School. Before the concert, Santa Claus stops by to hand out candy canes and greet everyone.

"When we're young and we're first hearing these songs, our hearts are very open and the music appeals to the heart," said Ouellette. "We believe in the magic of the holiday and that is a sentiment we never stop craving — that return to innocence and wonder and the magic that surrounds the holiday, both in the religious sense and the good old Santa sense. The magic of the holiday is a sense we will crave forever and hearing the music brings an emotional response, because it talks to when you heard it in the first place."

The MSU Youth Chorale, directed by Kyle Zeuch, joins the orchestra for "Silent Night," "The First Noel" and "Believe." The students in the side-by-side performance include Anushka Murthy, violin I, Anna Lin violin II, Nolan Feeny, cello, Genevieve Brown, flute/piccolo, Maddie Ardelean, trumpet and Joshua Martin, trombone. They range in age from 13 to 18. These students were selected after auditioning and worked with LSO musicians in sectionals.

Rayl says music is such an integral part of Christmas, whether the music is new or traditional. It creates an experience that people want to experience as a community whether it is in the mall, at church, or at a concert like the LSO Pops concert.

"I would argue that music in general is an integral part of the community and of celebration of people who have some kind of shared heritage. In a sense, it is a ritual and the nature of ritual is repetition of familiar things," Rayl said.

## If you go

### Holiday Pops Concert

•**When:** 3 p.m. Sunday at Wharton Center, Cobb Great Hall.

•**Tickets:** \$20 to \$47, call (517) 487-5001 or [www.lansingsymphony.org](http://www.lansingsymphony.org).

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