COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Beyond the Nutcracker: A Classical Holiday Season

Instructor: Betsy Schwarm
Music historian Betsy Schwarm is a familiar face and voice in the Denver performing arts world, giving pre-performance talks for the Colorado Symphony and Opera Colorado, and teaching general interest appreciation classes around the area. She is also the author of eight books on classical music and spent a dozen years on the air with the vintage KVOD-FM, “The Classical voice of Denver.”

Course Times: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 (October 16-November 6, 2019)

Course Location: Ruffatto Hall, Room 401

Course Description:
Tchaikovsky’s The Nutcracker is likely the most famous Christmas-themed classical composition. However, it’s far from the only example. From the Renaissance to today, some of the greatest composers have been moved to express the Christmas spirit – both sacred and secular – in music, and this class introduces us to some of the most impressive results. This class with music historian Betsy Schwarm, alumna of the vintage KVOD, will examine the question with musical examples, biographical perspectives, and societal connections. From Handel’s Messiah to Tchaikovsky’s beloved ballet to modern carol settings and even a Santa Claus Symphony by American composer William Henry Fry (1813 – 1864). We’ll also explore music for winter and have a glance into seasonal music from other traditions, too. No music reading required: just an open mind and open ears, as well as an active curiosity about how great music came to be what it is. We’ll also have information about upcoming concerts in the Denver area that fit with our class theme.

Session #1 – Messiah, a Mozartian Sleigh Ride, and Much More

Session #2 – Oh Holy Night, The Nutcracker, and Much More

Session #3 – Greensleeves, Amahl, and More: English and American Composers Before 1960

Session #4 – Likeable Current Offerings on Seasonal Subjects

Note: Printed texts and translations will be provided for most vocal works

RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS: None required; a list of suggested supplemental materials will be provided for those who’d like follow-up reading