

Leroy  
**ANDERSON**

**Orchestral Music • 3**

**Sleigh Ride**

**The Typewriter**

**Plink, Plank, Plunk!**

**The Syncopated Clock**

**BBC Concert Orchestra**

**Leonard Slatkin**

## Leroy Anderson (1908-1975)

### Orchestral Music • 3

Leroy Anderson liked to describe his compositions as “concert music with a popular touch” – which sums up his achievement beautifully. The British may have established a precedent in the field of light symphonic pieces, and several Anderson imitators – some of them quite worthy – sprang up in the wake of his commercial success in the 1950s. But Anderson took light concert music to an unsurpassed peak, investing as much time, craft, and concentrated inspiration upon his miniatures as if he were writing a symphony – and always in a distinctly American accent. Volume 3 of the first complete recording of Anderson’s orchestral music zeroes in upon the heart of his output where the level of invention is consistently astonishing, but also treats Anderson’s fans to a few hitherto-unrecorded rarities that have been released by his family.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1908, Anderson was a graduate of Harvard University, where he studied composition with Walter Piston and George Enescu and led the Harvard Band for a number of years. He seemed headed for a career in linguistics until a guest spot in 1936 leading the Boston Pops Orchestra in his *Harvard Fantasy* caught the discerning ear of Pops conductor Arthur Fiedler, who promptly asked Anderson to write some pieces for the orchestra. Following a long break during World War II, where he served in the U.S. Army as a translator of Scandinavian languages, Anderson became a regular at the Pops, crafting arrangements of popular music and contributing miniature gems of his own.

Anderson’s star rose to surprising heights after he was offered a recording contract of his own with Decca Records in 1950, for which he led pick-up orchestras of New York’s finest symphonic musicians in best-selling albums of his own compositions. He turned to Broadway, completing the score for one show, *Goldilocks*, in 1958 before returning to his metier, the miniature, with one final burst of new published material in 1962. Aside from writing a few unpublished original pieces, Anderson’s remaining years were spent mostly arranging and guest-conducting until his death from lung cancer in 1975.

Almost any Leroy Anderson composition has its own instantly recognizable profile, with sturdy structures, distinctive harmonies, and melodic ideas to burn. Some pieces simply bear the name of a musical form – no more, no less – and Anderson either has a fine time sending them up or leaving their interpretation up to the listener’s imagination.

*Promenade*, which the composer was working on while still in the Army, proceeds at a faster clip than the strolling pace that the title might suggest, giving the muted trumpet a fine, jaunty tune. In *Saraband*, the melody conforms to the stately Baroque dance form that Bach and Handel knew, but Anderson doubles the speed of the rhythm underpinning that tune – and before long, he injects some other mischievous ingredients into the machinery. *Serenata* is the vehicle for another pair of first-rate tunes, one in a minor key and a second in major, cruising over a percolating Latin guaracha-like rhythm. *Serenata* also bears the distinction of being the only Anderson piece (so far) to become a jazz standard; among many others, Cannonball Adderley, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan, Quincy Jones, and most recently Wayne Shorter, have recorded it.

Anderson was a master of using sound effects as integral parts of a composition, as opposed to gratuitously applied gimmicks. The most notorious of these pieces may have been *The Typewriter*, written in 1950 but held back for recording purposes until 1953, when it appeared as the B-side for *The Girl In Satin* on a single. Though computer technology rendered it obsolete, the humble manual typewriter has been given added life in live performance by Anderson’s concise musical gem, transformed into a relentlessly busy solo percussion instrument. *The Syncopated Clock*, which became famous in America as the theme for CBS-TV’s *The Late Show*, is another irresistible example of Anderson’s wry humor, with woodblocks depicting a clock that insists upon occasionally ticking on the wrong beats.

Written for the 1954 album *A Leroy Anderson ‘Pops’ Concert*, *Sandpaper Ballet* also employs an unusual

instrument. Inspired by ancient vaudeville acts where dancers sprinkled sand on the stage during their routines, Anderson has his percussionists use three grades of sandpaper to scratch out the rhythms in his own sprightly take on the old soft shoe. But the title does not necessarily dictate the means in Anderson's world, for *The Penny Whistle Song* assigns some of his catchiest, most endearing happy-go-lucky tunes to the flute section.

For a long time *Blue Tango* was considered to be Anderson's biggest hit, but gradually, almost by stealth, *Sleigh Ride* has overtaken it and probably will hold that title for eternity. Although not a Christmas song per se, it became a permanent holiday standard thanks in part to Mitchell Parish's added-on lyrics that perfectly latch onto the rhythms of the piece's propulsive tunes and joyously evoke winters of the past. Anderson himself never figured out why some of his compositions became more popular than others. For example, on the album that yielded *Blue Tango*, he thought that *Plink, Plank, Plunk!*, a sequel to *Jazz Pizzicato* for plucked strings that bubbles over with ingenious pointed wit, would be the hit.

One of Anderson's most haunting tone poems, *The Phantom Regiment* depicts a nameless body of soldiers marching into and then trotting across the scene before marching away without a trace. A *Trumpeter's Lullaby*, written for Boston Pops' trumpeter Roger Voisin who wanted something other than the usual flag-waver, has become a popular vehicle for trumpeters who want to display their lyrical side, and Anderson's genius for supporting detail is evident in the emotional harmonies during the brief animated central episode.

One delightful new find in this volume, *Mother's Whistler* is an early piece (1940) with an impish theme for the violins that comically repeats over and over, interrupted by some unexpected disturbances. Probably withdrawn by the always-self-critical composer, the piece remained under wraps for forty years until it turned up in the Boston Pops library in 1980, and then had to wait another 27 years for its first recording here.

*Melody on Two Notes*, composed in 1966 but also not published during Anderson's lifetime, nor recorded until now, was part of a projected suite for beginning ensembles. The basic tune, consisting of a G and a D, can

hardly be simpler, but Anderson uses his thorough knowledge of harmony, filtered through his own musical signatures, to construct a viable, attractive piece of music.

*Harvard Sketches*, another first recording, is the original 1939 version of *Alma Mater*, which was published in 1954 with somewhat different movement titles and often markedly different musical materials. Anderson hoped to give Harvard students the dubious thrill of self-recognition in episodes such as *Freshman in Harvard Square* (represented by a saucy out-of-tune clarinet), or the uptight librarian rapping the desk for silence in *Widener Reading Room*. In the latter the general listener is also reminded of fellow New Englander Charles Ives's layered disruptions of serenity.

In his numerous arrangements of music by others, Anderson often displayed the same degree of creative thinking and wit that he did in his own compositions. His treatment of the homely nursery tune *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, complete with slapstick sounds from the barnyard and elsewhere, always provoked laughter from Boston Pops audiences. Interestingly, two of his era's biggest pop stars, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley, also recorded their own versions of *Old MacDonald*, but Anderson's is a lot funnier. While Anderson was arranging *Seventy-Six Trombones* from Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, he must have noticed that the name John Philip Sousa figures in Prof. Harold Hill's patter just before he launches into the song. So Anderson gradually lets Sousa usurp his arrangement, even pulling off some clever Willsonian fusions of the latter's tunes and Sousa's.

On the other hand, Anderson's arrangement of the Gershwins' *Wintergreen for President* (from *Of Thee I Sing*) hews close to the original's bustling manner. And in *Suite Of Carols for Brass Choir*, one of three such suites (the others were for strings and winds) arranged for a 1955 holiday season album, Anderson wears an entirely straight face and turns out tasteful, soul-satisfying writing for brass that is way above the level of the average Christmas potpourri.

Richard S. Ginell

## BBC Concert Orchestra



The BBC Concert Orchestra was formed in 1952. It has a wide and flexible repertoire, ranging from classical works and musical theatre to light music and film scores, and appears with a huge range of artists every year. Its Conductor Laureate is Barry Wordsworth and Principal Guest Conductor is Charles Hazlewood. Anne Dudley was the Orchestra's first Composer-in-Association; and Jonny Greenwood has now taken on that rôle as Composer-in-Residence. The Orchestra has close links with BBC Radio 3 which broadcasts the majority of its concerts and with BBC Radio 2 where it is featured on the weekly programme *Friday Night is Music Night*. On BBC television the BBC

Concert Orchestra has appeared in several programmes and can be heard on countless BBC TV soundtracks including the award-winning natural history series *Blue Planet* and *Planet Earth* on BBC 1. The Orchestra performs annually at the BBC Proms, makes regular visits to the Royal Festival, Royal Albert and Barbican halls in London and appears throughout Britain and abroad. It has made many recordings, with recent releases on Chandos, ASV White Line, Dutton Epoch and Naxos. The Orchestra is resident at Chichester Festival Theatre and Watford Colosseum.

## Leonard Slatkin

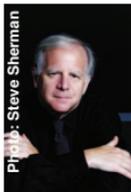


Photo: Steve Sherman

Appointed Music Director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra from 2008, after completing his twelfth and final season as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra, the distinguished American conductor Leonard Slatkin continues as Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Music Advisor to the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, and Conductor Laureate of the Saint Louis Symphony, of which he was Music Director for seventeen seasons. He has served as Festival Director of the Cleveland Orchestra's Blossom Festival (1990-1999), Principal Guest Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra (1997-2000), Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra (2000-2004) and Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl (2004-2007), in a brilliant international career. His many recordings have won five Grammy awards and further Grammy Nominations, while honours and awards include the 2003 National Medal of Arts, the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, the American Symphony Orchestra League's Gold Baton for service to American music, ASCAP awards with both the National and Saint Louis symphonies, honorary doctorates from The Juilliard School, Indiana University, University of Missouri and the Declaration of Honour in Silver from the Austrian ambassador to the United States for outstanding contributions to cultural relations.

### Get this free download from Classicsonline!

Chadwick: Symphony No. 2: *Allegretto scherzando*

Copy this Promotion Code **NaxCghBC8itc** and go to [http://www.classiconline.com/mpkey/chadw\\_main](http://www.classiconline.com/mpkey/chadw_main).

### Downloading Instructions

- 1 Log on to Classicsonline. If you do not have a Classicsonline account yet, please register at <http://www.classiconline.com/UserLogIn/SignUp.aspx>.
- 2 Enter the Promotion Code mentioned above. 3 On the next screen, click on "Add to My Downloads".

8.559357



Playing  
Time:  
**61:49**

# Leroy ANDERSON

(1908-1975)

All rights in this sound recording, artwork, texts and translations reserved. Unauthorised public performance, broadcasting and copying of this compact disc prohibited. © & © 2008 Naxos Rights International Ltd. Disc made in Canada. Printed and assembled in USA.

- |           |  |              |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Harvard Sketches (Lowell House Bells – Freshman in Harvard Square – Widener Reading Room – Class Day Confetti Battle) (1939)*</b> | <b>4:49</b>  |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Melody on Two Notes (1966)*</b>   | <b>1:55</b>  |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Mother's Whistler (1940)*</b>   | <b>3:30</b>  |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>The Penny Whistle Song (1951)</b>   | <b>2:38</b>  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>The Phantom Regiment (1951)</b>   | <b>3:09</b>  |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Plink, Plank, Plunk! (1951)</b>   | <b>2:49</b>  |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Promenade (1951)</b>  | <b>2:47</b>  |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Sandpaper Ballet (1954)</b>   | <b>3:18</b>  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Saraband (1948)</b>   | <b>3:36</b>  |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Serenata (1947)</b>   | <b>3:54</b>  |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Old MacDonald Had a Farm (1947)</b>   | <b>3:16</b>  |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Seventy-Six Trombones (Willson/arr. Anderson) (1958)</b>  | <b>2:57</b>  |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Sleigh Ride (1948)</b>  | <b>2:47</b>  |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Suite of Carols for Brass Choir (1955)</b>  | <b>11:42</b> |
| <b>15</b> | <b>Wintergreen for President (Gershwin/arr. Anderson) (1932)*</b>  | <b>1:25</b>  |
| <b>16</b> | <b>The Typewriter (1950) 1</b>   | <b>1:43</b>  |
| <b>17</b> | <b>A Trumpeter's Lullaby (1949) 2</b>  | <b>3:08</b>  |
| <b>18</b> | <b>The Syncopated Clock (1945)</b>   | <b>2:26</b>  |

\*World Première Recording

Alasdair Malloy, Solo Typewriter <sup>1</sup>

Catherine Moore, Solo Trumpet <sup>2</sup>

**BBC Concert Orchestra • Leonard Slatkin**

Recorded at The Colosseum, Town Hall, Watford, UK,  
from 12th to 14th April, 2007

Producer: Neil Varley • Engineers: Neil Pemberton and  
Marvin Ware • Publishers: EMI/Mills Music (tracks 8, 14,  
16); Woodbury Music (tracks 1-7, 9-11, 13, 17-18); Frank  
Music Corp. and Meredith Willson Music (track 12); Warner  
Bros. Music (track 15) • Booklet notes: Richard S. Ginell

Cover photograph courtesy of the Leroy Anderson family



AMERICAN CLASSICS

Leroy Anderson etched out his own unique place in American music – a composer rigorously trained in the classical tradition whose records topped the pop charts, a meticulous arranger of music whose own melodies were crafted with inventive precision. Here, in the first complete cycle of Anderson's orchestral music, the Anderson family has made available several pieces that the composer did not release, with some first recordings scattered among the familiar and not-so-familiar titles. Volume Three includes the notorious musical gem *The Typewriter*, in which the machine is transformed into a relentlessly busy percussion instrument, the tasteful and soul-satisfying *Suite of Carols for Brass Choir*, and Anderson's biggest hit, *Sleigh Ride*.

BBC  
RADIO



90 – 93FM

**BBC Concert ORCHESTRA**

Includes Free Downloadable Bonus Track  
at [www.classicsonline.com](http://www.classicsonline.com).

Please see inside booklet for full details.

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)



6 36943 93572 9