

Leroy Anderson

An arranger, orchestrator, musician, conductor, and songwriter, Leroy Anderson (1908–1975) is best known for writing the holiday staple “Sleigh Ride,” which is included in this collection. Along with dozens of other so-called “light classical” favorites, the works of this modest man from Cambridge, Massachusetts, have had a prodigious effect on American popular music. Very few individuals can be credited with inventing a particular style of music, but Anderson’s highly innovative, infectious, and delightful “pops miniatures” combined classical and popular music in a way that had not been done until he arrived on the scene in the 1930s.

Although better known as a composer of instrumental works, Anderson initially wrote lyrics as well. In the early 1950s, Anderson collaborated with lyricist Mitchell Parish to produce vocal versions of seven of his best-known compositions. In fact, if it weren’t for Parish’s lyrics, “Sleigh Ride” would most likely not be ranked alongside “White Christmas,” “Silent Night,” and “Jingle Bells” as one of the most familiar and beloved songs performed during the Christmas season.

In commemorating the centennial of Anderson’s birth, Alfred Publishing has assembled 33 of Anderson’s songs for this collection. Included are all seven songs combining Anderson’s melodies with Mitchell Parish’s lyrics plus songs from Anderson’s one and only Broadway musical, the 1958 production of *Goldilocks*. As an added “bonus,” two previously unpublished songs are included that Anderson wrote toward the beginning of his career, along with one song from an abandoned musical based on the Civil War saga *Gone With the Wind*.

Early Years

Franklin Leroy (pronounced “luh-ROY”) Anderson was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on June 29, 1908, to Swedish immigrants who had arrived in America in the late 19th century. Both of Leroy’s parents were musical; his father sang and played mandolin while his mother played organ at a Covenant church near their home. Young Leroy enjoyed the folk songs his family brought over from Sweden as well as popular music of the day. Much of the latter he picked up from listening to radio, which was first becoming prevalent in the 1920s.

While growing up, Anderson learned a variety of instruments, including piano, organ, string bass, tuba, and trombone, the latter instrument as the result of his father’s desire to see his son play someday in the Harvard University Band. Anderson’s gift for arranging and orchestrating came early, and by the time he entered Harvard as a freshman in 1925, he had already begun writing music, having composed, orchestrated, and conducted his high school class song.



Anderson in the 1960s.



Bror and Anna Anderson with their two children, Franklin Leroy (standing) and Russell (seated).



Anderson as a trombone student at Harvard.

THE LEROY ANDERSON

SONGBOOK • A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

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SLEIGH RIDE

Words by
MITCHELL PARISH

Music by
LEROY ANDERSON

Moderately bright

Just hear those

sleigh bells jin - gle - ing, ring - ting - tin - gle - ing too. Come on, it's

love - ly weath - er for a sleigh ride to - geth - er with you. Out - side the