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CENTRAL IOWA SYMPHONY OFFERS HOLIDAY CHEER DECEMBER 11

Sounds of the Season: The 12 Gifts of Christmas
4 p.m., Saturday, December 11
Ames City Auditorium, 515 Clark Avenue

AMES, Iowa -- Central Iowa Symphony's December 11 Sounds of the Season concert promises a sleigh full of holiday cheer -- from sing-a-longs and traditional favorites to a reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas set to an orchestral accompaniment.

Central Iowa Symphony is partnering with the new Ames Main Street Cultural District to make their annual Sounds of the Season concert, "The 12 Gifts of Christmas," a holiday highlight for families and shoppers as well as symphony patrons. Some lucky concert-goers will receive gift certificates during the concert, thanks to donations from downtown businesses and the 3M Corporation. Symphony tickets also are included in downtown Ames' "Evening on the Town" drawing that began in November.

The December 11 performance will begin at 4 p.m. in Ames City Auditorium. Families are encouraged to come at 3:15 p.m. to join guest conductor Matt Smith in the Ames City Council Chambers for an informal discussion about the program.

"Our concert will be appropriate for all ages," said Smith, who also directs the Cyclone Marching Band at Iowa State University. "We set the concert at 4 o'clock so that people could spend the day shopping and then celebrate with the Central Iowa Symphony. Afterwards there's still time for dinner at a downtown restaurant."

Highlighting the program will be a vocal performance of "O Holy Night" and "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" by baritone Richard Todd Payne. Payne has sung professionally with opera companies in Memphis, Indianapolis, Houston and Santa Fe and is currently on the faculty at Southwest Missouri State University.

"Todd has a wonderful voice," said Smith, who has known Payne since they were students at the University of Memphis. "He will rattle the bricks at Ames City Auditorium."

Smith said he also will feature well-known pieces such as "Carol of the Bells" and "Sleigh Ride" as well as lesser known Russian Christmas music. Also on the program will be a reading of Clement Clarke Moore's beloved "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" by Ames broadcaster Trent Rice.

Rice has been news director of KASI-AM and KCCQ-FM in Ames since 1997 and hosts the week-day news and public affairs program "Your Turn." A native of Plattsmouth, Nebraska, he has also worked in Omaha, Grand Island and Kearney, winning broadcast awards in Nebraska as well as Iowa.

Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$11 for seniors (65 and older) and \$5 for students of all ages. They are available at the door or in advance at Big Table Books and Rieman Music. Credit card orders can be placed by Ames City Auditorium offices, (515) 239-5360.

Ames businesses who have donated gift certificates to be awarded during the concert are: Everts Flowers, Octagon Center for the Arts, The Quilting Connection, Wells Fargo Bank, Commercial Federal Bank, Firehouse Books, Big Table Books, Wheatsfield Grocery, Temptations, Gilger Design, Savvy Shopper, Nature's Touch and the 3M Corporation.

Central Iowa Symphony is a 70-member community orchestra comprised of professional musicians, music educators, exceptional student performers and accomplished amateurs from Ames and central Iowa. Now in its 18th season, the symphony is supported by the City of Ames Commission on the Arts, contributions by individuals and businesses and private grants.

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NOTE: A high-resolution photo of guest vocalist Richard Todd Payne can be downloaded from the CIS web site: www.cisymphony.org.