

PRESS RELEASE

Friday, October 27, 2006

Christmas with the POPS offers two Holiday Performances, Food Drive

Kick off your holiday season with the **Bloomington POPS Orchestra**, while lending a helping hand to the Hoosier Hills Food Bank!

The Bloomington POPS Orchestra presents **Christmas with the POPS: “Light Up Your Holidays”** on Friday, November 24 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. Two performances will surround the traditional Bloomington downtown Canopy of Lights. A fun-filled, 50-minute, family-friendly event, the first show is scheduled for 5:30 pm, prior to Bloomington’s Canopy of Lights ceremony on the Square. The second show, beginning at 8:00 pm, is 80 minutes of holiday musical entertainment, appropriate for all ages. Between shows, the Bloomington POPS Chorus will entertain the crowds at the Canopy Lighting with lively holiday music.

Tickets may be purchased at the Sunrise Box Office next to the Buskirk-Chumley theatre, by calling the POPS office at (812) 336-8747, or online at the POPS website www.bloomingtonpops.org. Tickets may also be purchased at the door the evening of the performance. Tickets for 5:30 pm show are \$5 per child (12 & under) and \$12 per adult. Tickets for the 8:00 pm show are \$5 per child (12 & under) and \$18 per adult.

Conductor Chris Ludwa will lead the POPS holiday shows. Featured artists will be Miss Indiana Betsy Uschkrat, the High Flyers Acrobatic Troupe, Violinist Zoe Martin-Droike, and of course a visit from Santa Claus! Pre-show entertainment, featuring “Carl’s Christmas Bells” will delight young and old alike!

Musical selections for the two performances will include beloved holiday classics along with more contemporary pieces like *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and the jazzy Duke Ellington arrangement of *Nutcracker Suite*. And of course the traditional POPS Christmas sing-a-long will be included! “The POPS has always specialized in a broad range of repertoire to reach out to several generations of people,” says Conductor Chris Ludwa, “so that entire families from grandchildren to great-grandparents can enjoy the concert together. There are few other concerts that cater to this need for intergenerational programming.”

Guest soloist Betsy Uschkrat, Miss Indiana 2006, is currently a second-year graduate student at the Jacobs School of Music, where she studies voice with Costanza Cuccaro. She has performed in many IU Opera productions, most recently *Manon*. She will represent Indiana in the 2007 Miss America Scholarship Pageant on January 29, 2007.

All are invited to join Uschkrat in her fight against hunger by bringing a canned or non-perishable food donation for the Hoosier Hills Food Bank. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to sing with the Bloomington POPS. This concert and food drive is yet another example of Bloomington's generosity and love of the arts. I'm looking forward to

the event as a great beginning to the holiday season with an added chance to give to those in need in our community.” Uschkrat has been an active supporter of the Hoosier Hills Food Bank, sponsoring a benefit concert last summer, attending volunteer recognition events to entertain and thank food bank volunteers, and assisting with major food drives for the organization. As Miss Indiana, she has expanded her efforts on behalf of hungry Hoosiers and has been named the spokesperson for *FIsH (Feeding Indiana's Hungry)*, the state food bank association, of which Hoosier Hills is a member. Over the past year, Uschkrat has worked closely with United Way of Monroe County and the Hoosier Hills Food Bank (a United Way member agency) to help ensure that people in our community have access to sufficient food.

The Bloomington based High Flyers aerialist and acrobatic troupe has been presenting widely acclaimed shows in Bloomington and central Indiana for over 15 years. This performance group is known for a variety of acts including the flying trapeze, Spanish web, silk, rings, hoops, swings, tumbling and trampoline. Their acts have been featured in many circuses and throughout the United States, Japan and Puerto Rico.

Sixteen year old violinist Zoe Martin-Doike will be making her debut appearance with the Bloomington POPS Orchestra. A member of Indiana University’s Pre-College music program, Zoe studies with Mimi Zweig at Indiana University. Zoe won the Honolulu Symphony Concerto competition in 2003. Zoe and her family are new to Bloomington, having moved here in 2006. “I’m very excited to be performing with the Bloomington POPS. I was just thrilled when they called and asked me to be a part of this holiday concert!”

For more information on *Christmas with the POPS: Light up Your Holidays*, or the Bloomington POPS organization, please call the Bloomington POPS office at (812) 336-8747, or visit their website at www.bloomingtonpops.org.