

Sleigh Ride

Leroy Anderson

(1908-1975)

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts of Swedish parents, Anderson had a perfectly formal education at the New England Conservatory of Music and Harvard University. At Harvard he led the University Band and arranged for dance bands in the Boston area. His work attracted the attention of Arthur Fiedler, the conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, who commissioned Anderson's first compositions, *Jazz Pizzicato* and *Jazz Legato*. In 1942 the composer joined the army and his linguistic skills gave him assignments as translator and interpreter, and later as Chief of the Scandinavian Desk of Military Intelligence at the Pentagon. He continued to compose all the while, and although (or more probably because) his metier was to write short instrumental pieces that would fit comfortably on one side of a ten-inch 78rpm disk his music became immensely popular. The Boston Pops recording of *Sleigh Ride*, written during a heat wave in 1946, was the first purely instrumental piece to reach No.1 in the Billboard Pop Music Chart, and it remains a staple of the supermarket Xmas medley: the ultimate accolade.