



WASSAIL!

An Irish-Appalachian Christmas

Conceived, Written & Directed by Jeannette Sorrell

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
How Jesus us our saviour did for us to die.
For poor, ord'n'ry people like you and like I.

We dedicate this concert to Wanderers everywhere – those seeking shelter in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, those seeking a home in America 200 years ago, and those seeking shelter from violence and oppression today. Their inextinguishable spirit inspires our music – reminding us that immigration is a beautiful part of our shared heritage in America.

Irish music and its offspring, Appalachian music, are the voice of “the poor, ordin’ry people.” When the Irish immigrants crossed the Atlantic, leaving their lives of poverty and starvation in the British Isles, they brought their music with them.

They left due to endless years of unemployment and hunger. Though called the “Potato Famine,” the Great Famine that struck Ireland in the 1840’s was not simply a natural disaster. Ever since the British had conquered Ireland in 1536, the Irish peasants had been forced to pay rent to their British landowners. By the 1800’s, the Irish could not afford to purchase the foods their farms produced. Instead, their grain and meat crops were exported to the wealthy ruling classes in Britain, while the people subsisted increasingly on potatoes – the only thing they could afford.

When a blight killed the potato crops in the 1840’s, the Irish people were starving and could not pay their rent. Hundreds of thousands of them were evicted. About one million people died. It is believed that nearly 2 million people emigrated from Ireland in desperation during this time. Many of these became the Appalachian immigrants of America.

This is why Celtic carols so often emphasize the plight of the poor. The message that Jesus came to poor people – that he was born to a humble couple in an oppressed nation, forced to travel as migrants – this theme runs strong through Celtic music.

We dedicate this concert to Wanderers everywhere – those seeking shelter in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, those seeking a home in America 200 years ago, and those seeking shelter from violence and oppression today. Their inextinguishable spirit inspires our music – reminding us that immigration is a beautiful part of our shared heritage in America.

Jeannette Sorrell, Cleveland, December 2023

APOLLO'S FIRE

Jeannette Sorrell, *harpsichord & direction*

Fiona Gillespie, *soprano vocals*

Sam Kreidenweis, *baritone vocal*

Anna O'Connell, harp & vocals

Elora Kares, soprano (Young Artist Apprentice)

Caitlin Hedge, fiddle & vocals

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin

Emi Tanabe, violin

Kathie Stewart, wooden flutes

Tina Bergmann, hammered dulcimer

René Schiffer, cello

William Simms, lute & guitar

ENSEMBLE SINGERS

Andréa Walker, soprano

Ashlee Foreman, soprano

Constantine Novotny, baritone

Francisco Prado, baritone

~ PROGRAM ~

Part 1: Christmas Eve in Ireland, 1849

I. Wassail!

GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL & YORKSHIRE CAROL – *trad. British Isles,*
arr. J. Sorrell

CHRISTMAS EVE REEL – *trad. Irish*

II. Winter by the Hearth

DRIVE THE COLD WINTER AWAY – *Elizabethan Carol, c. 1625*
Come, My Children Dere – *17th c. Scottish carol, arr. A. Montgomerie & JS*

III. A Babe is Born

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? (MY LAGAN LOVE) – *trad. Irish*
Fiona Gillespie, vocals

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? (Greensleeves) – *variations by Playford,*
The Division Violin, 1685

WEXFORD CAROL/I SAW THREE SHIPS – *trad. Irish*
NEW CHRISTMAS REEL – *trad. Irish*

IV. Travelers Following a Star

O'CAROLAN'S FAREWELL – *Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738)*
Anna O'Connell, harp

THE PARTING GLASS – *trad. Scottish/Irish*
Fiona Gillespie, Caitlin Hedge, Sam Kreideneweis, vocals

MASTERS IN THIS HALL
Lyrics: William Morris, c. 1850's; Melody: French 17th c. dance tune

– INTERMISSION –

Part 2: Christmas Day in Appalachia, 1850

V. Son of Stars, Son of Sky

'T WAS IN THE MOON OF WINTERTIME (Huron Carol – Native American/Canadian 1643)

BRIGHT MORNING STARS – *Southern folk hymn, arr. The Chivalrous Crickets*

STAR IN THE EAST – *The Southern Harmony, 1835*

JOSEPH & MARY/I WONDER AS I WANDER –
trad. English & Appalachian (J. J. Niles), arr. J. Sorrell

Fiona Gillespie & Sam Kreideneweis, vocals
Jeannette Sorrell, harpsichord

FROST & SNOW/28TH OF JANUARY – *trad. Celtic & Appalachian, arr. J. Sorrell,*
T. Bergmann

René Schiffer, cello | Tina Bergmann, hammered dulcimer

CHRIST CHILD LULLABY (TALLADH CHRIOSTA) – *trad. Scottish, arr. J. Sorrell*
Fiona Gillespie, vocals

VI. Christmas Barn Dance – *arr. J. Sorrell*

THE OLD YEAR NOW AWAY IS FLED – *trad. English carol, c. 1642*

SOMERSET WASSAIL – *trad. English*

OLD CHRISTMAS EVE REEL/ KENTUCKY WASSAIL – *trad. Celtic & Appalachian*

- FEATURED PERFORMERS -

FIONA GILLESPIE, *soprano vocals*, is a classically-trained soprano, folk singer, instrumentalist, and songwriter based in Philadelphia. Raised in a family of Celtic musicians, she splits her time singing with professional chamber and choral ensembles around the nation, touring with her folk band, The Chivalrous Crickets, and producing recordings and events with her early music/folk crossover ensemble, Makaris. Select upcoming featured appearances include the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Celtic Classic Festival, The Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado, and Choral Arts Philadelphia.

TINA BERGMANN, *hammered dulcimer*, was hailed by Pete Seeger as “the best hammered dulcimer player I’ve heard in my life.” A fourth-generation musician, Bergmann began playing music at age eight, learning the mountain dulcimer from her mother in the aural tradition and the hammered dulcimer at the knee of West Virginia-native builder and performer Loy Swiger. She has been a featured performer across the United States, performing solo; as a duo with her husband, bassist Bryan Thomas; with her string band Hu\$hmoney; and as a featured soloist with Apollo’s Fire and Canadian early music group, La Nef.

ELORA KARES, *soprano*, is a Young Artist Apprentice with Apollo's Fire. Passionate about baroque music, Elora is a homeschool high school senior and a scholarship student in voice, cello, and composition at the CIM Academy. She has been featured on NPR's national young artist showcase, *From the Top*, and has performed as soloist in Apollo's Fire's "Lift Ev'ry Voice" concerts.

SAM KREIDENWEIS, *bass-baritone*, is praised nationally and abroad for his stylistic versatility, rich sound, and engaging stage presence. As a vocal chamber music artist Sam appears nationally with Cantus, Skylark Vocal Ensemble (Atlanta, GA), Kinnara Ensemble (Princeton, NJ) and Vocal Arts Ensemble (Cincinnati, OH) and has sung previously with the Grammy Award-winning Phoenix Chorale. Internationally Sam works with the Dublin, Ireland based ensemble Anúna with whom he has toured throughout Europe, China, and Japan.

ANNA O'CONNELL, *harp & vocals*, is a doctoral student in historical performance practice at Case Western Reserve University. She has researched performance practice and self-accompaniment on harps ranging from medieval to modern folk instruments. As a vocalist, she has sung with the Hong Kong Early Music Society, Cleveland Chamber Choir, and Quire Cleveland. She also holds degrees in Choral Music from the University of Southern California and Music Education from Providence College.

RENÉ SCHIFFER, *cello*, is a native of Holland. He was a member of La Petite Bande for sixteen years and has also performed with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Les Musiciens du Louvre, and in over 30 projects with Tafelmusik of Toronto. As a concerto soloist, he has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood, and St Martin-in-the Fields in London.

EMI TANABE, *fiddle*, enjoys a multi-faceted career as a baroque violinist and solo crossover artist. In addition to being a core member of Apollo's Fire, she performs with the Chicago-based period groups Haymarket Opera and Third Coast Baroque. Her facility with world music styles and improvisation has led to many solo violin performances with Tango, Flamenco, Celtic, and jazz ensembles across the country.

- LYRICS -

Part 1: Christmas Eve in Ireland, 1849

1. Wassail!

Gloucestershire Wassail

Traditional British Isles

Wassail, wassail, all over the town!
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown.
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree.
With a wassail bowl we'll drink to thee!

Come butler, then fill us a bowl of the best.
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest.
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small...
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all!

Refrain:

Drink to thee, drink to thee,
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink to thee.
Then here is to Colly and to her long tail.

Pray God bless our Master, may he never fail.
A bowl of strong beer, I pray you draw near
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.
Refrain.

Then here's to the maid in the lily-white smock,
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock.
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin,
For to let these jolly wassailers in.
Refrain.

Yorkshire Carol

Traditional British Isles

Here we come a-wassailing Among the leaves so green.
Here we come a wand'ring, so fair to be seen.
Love and joy come to you,
and to you your wassail too.
And God bless you and send you a happy new year,
and God send you a happy new year.

Call up the butler of this house, put on his golden ring.
Let him bring us up a glass o' beer
And better we shall sing.
Love and joy come to you...

God bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress too.
And all the little children that round the table go.
Love and joy come to you...

II. Winter by the Hearth

Drive the Cold Winter Away

Elizabethan Carol

All hail to the days that merit more praise
Than all the rest of the year,
And welcome the nights that double delights,
As well for the poor as the peer!
Good fortune attend each merry man's friend,
That doth but the best that he may;
Forgetting old wrongs, with carols and songs,
To drive the cold winter away.

This time of the year is spent in good cheer,
And neighbours together do meet,
To sit by the fire, with friendly desire,
Each other in love do greet;
Old grudges forgot, are put in the pot,
All sorrows aside they lay,
The old and the young doth carol his song,
To drive the cold winter away.

To mask and to mum kind neighbours will come
With wassails of nut-brown ale,
To drink and carouse to all in the house,
As merry as bucks in the dale;

Where cake, bread and cheese is brought for your fees,
To make you the longer stay;
At the fire to warm will do you no harm,
To drive the cold winter away.

Come, My Children Dere

17th c. Scottish carol

Come, my children dere, drau near me,
To my Love when that I sing,
Mak your ears and hairts to heir me,
For it is no earthly thing,
Bot a love far above
Other loves all, I say,
Which is sure to indure
When as all things shall decay.

O my Lord and Love my loyal,
What a prais does thou deserve!
Tho' thou be a Prince most royal,
With the Angels thee to serve,
Yit a poor creature
Tho hes lovit all thy lyfe,
Thou didst chuis the refus
Of the world to be they wife.

Whill I did behold the favor
Of his countenance so fair
Whill I smellit the sweet savor
Of his garments rich and rair,
'Oh,' I said, 'if I had
To my love you Prince of Glore!
For my chose would I lose
Other loves I loved befor.'

Whill I did these word besyd me
With a secreit sigh confess,
Lo, my Lord and Love espyd me
And dreu near me whair I was;
Then a ring did he thring
On my finger that wes fine:
'Tak,' quod he, 'this to the,
For a pledge that I am thyne.'

'Nou thou hes that hou desyrit,
Me to be thy Lord and Love,
All the thing that thou requyrit
To thee heir, I do approve:
Yit againe, for my pane,
Only this I crave of thee:
For my pairt, keep my hairt
As a virgin chast to me.'

III. A Babe is Born

What Child is This?

Traditional British Isles

What child is this, who laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds their watch are keeping.
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,
Haste, haste to bring him laud –
The babe, the son of Mary!

The Wexford Carol

Traditional Irish

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son
With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angel did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear
Arise and go, the angels said
To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born

I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In

Melody: Traditional British Isles (17th c.); Lyrics: William Sandy, 1833

I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
Pray whither sailed those ships all three,

On Christmas day in the morning?
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

IV. Travelers Following a Star

The Parting Glass

Traditional Scottish & Irish (Skene Manuscript, early 17th c)

Oh, all the money that e'er I spent
I spent it in good company.
And all the harm that e'er I've done,
Alas, it was to none but me.
And all I've done for want of wit
To memory now I can't recall.
So fill to me the parting glass,
Good night and joy be with you all!

Oh, all the comrades that e'er I've had
Are sorry for my going away.
And all the sweethearts that e'er I've had
Would wish me one more day to stay.
But since it falls unto my lot
That I should rise and you should not.
I'll gently rise and I'll softly call
Good night and joy be with you all!

Masters in this Hall

Lyrics: William Morris, c. 1850's

Masters in this hall, hear ye all the news today
Brought from over sea, and ever you I pray.

Refrain:

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell! Nowell, sing we clear!
Holpen are all folk on earth, born the Son of God so dear.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell! Nowell, sing we loud!
God today hath poor folk raised and cast a-down the proud.

Quoth the shepherds then, "To Beth' em town we go,
To see a mighty lord lie in manger low."

Then to Beth' em town went we two by two,
In a sorry place we heard the oxen low.

Refrain.

Ox and ass Him know, kneeling on their knee,
Wonderous joy had I this little babe to see.
This is Christ, the Lord, masters be ye glad!
Christmas is come in, and no folk shall be sad!

Refrain.

INTERMISSION

Part 2: Christmas Day in Appalachia, 1850

V. Son of Stars, Son of Sky

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime (Huron Carol)

*Lyrics by Jean de Brébeuf (Jesuit Missionary in Canada) in the Wendat language of the Huron tribe, 1642
English version by Jesse Edgar Middleton, 1926*

'Twas in the moon of winter-time
When all the birds had fled,
That mighty [Gitchi Manitou](#)
Sent angel choirs instead;
Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wandering hunters heard the hymn:
"Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born,
In excelsis gloria."

Within a lodge of broken bark
The tender Babe was found,
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapp'd His beauty round;
But as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang loud and high...
"Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born,
In excelsis gloria."

O children of the forest free,
O sons of Manitou,
The Holy Child of earth and heaven
Is born today for you.
Come kneel before the radiant Boy
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy.
"Jesus your King is born, Jesus is born,
In excelsis gloria."

Bright Morning Stars

Traditional Appalachian Hymn

Bright morning stars are rising,
Day is a-breakin' in my soul.

We are down in the valley a-prayin'.
Day is a-breakin' in my soul.

We are goin' up to heaven, shoutin' –
Day is a-breakin' in my soul.

Star in the East/The Shepherd's Star

Shape-Note Hymn, Southern Harmony, 1835

Hail, blessed morn! See the great mediator
Down from the regions of glory descend!

Shepherds, go worship the Babe in the manger.
Lo, for a guard the bright angels attend.

Refrain:

*Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid.
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.*

Cold on his cradle, the dew-drops are shining;
Low lies his bed with the beasts of the stall.
Angels adore him, in slumbers reclining.
Wise men and shepherds before him do fall.

Refrain.

Joseph and Mary

Traditional British Isles Carol, lyrics adapted by J. Sorrell

When Joseph and Mary to Beth'lem did come,
The inns they were filled, both all and some.
And Joseph entreated them, ev'ry one.
They did wander and seek, but rooms there were none.
They did wander but found the doors closed, ev'ry one.
"Wander elsewhere!" 'twas said, "For rooms we have none."

I Wonder as I Wander

Traditional Appalachian Carol, collected and adapted by J. J. Nile

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for us to die
For poor, ord'n'ry people like you and like I.
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cow's stall,
Wish wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus and wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

The Christ Child's Lullaby (*Taladh Chriosta*)

Traditional Irish, translated from the Gaelic by Seamus Ennis

My love, my pride, my treasure, oh,
My wonder new and pleasure, oh!
My son, my beauty ever you,
Who am I to bear you here?

The cause of talk and tale am I,
The cause of greatest fame am I,
The cause of proudest care on high,
To have for mine the King of all!

And though you are the King of all,
They sent you to a manger stall,
When at your feet they all should fall
And glorify my child, the King.

My love, my pride, my treasure, oh...!

VI. Christmas Barn Dance

The Old Year Now Away is Fled

Traditional British Isles

The old year now away is fled,
The new year it is entered;
Then let us all our sins down tread,
And joyfully all appear.
Let's merry be this holiday,
And let us run with sport and play,
Hang¹ sorrow, let's cast care away
God send us a merry new year!

And now with New-Year's gifts each friend
Unto each other they do send;
God grant we may our lives amend,
And that truth may now appear.
Now like the snake cast off your skin
Of evil thoughts and wicked sin,
And to amend this new year begin:
God send us a merry new year!

And now let all the company
In friendly manner all agree,
For we are here welcome all may see
Unto this jolly good cheer.
I thank my master and my dame,
The which are founders of the same,
To eat, to drink now is no shame:
God send us a happy new year!⁴

Somerset Wassail

Traditional British Isles

Wassail and wassail, all over the town!
The cup it is white, and the ale it is brown.
The cup it is made of the good ashen tree,
And so is the malt of the best barley.

Refrain:

*For it's your wassail and it's our wassail,
And it's joy be to you, and a jolly wassail!*

There was an old man and he had an old cow,
And how for to keep her, he didna' know how.
He built up a barn for to keep his cow warm,
And a drop or two of cider will do us no harm!
No harm, boys, harm! No harm, boys, harm!
And a drop of two of cider will do us no harm!

The girt dog of Lamport, he burnt his long tail
And this is the night we go singing Wassail.
Oh Master and Missus, now we must be gone.
God bless all in the house till we do come again.
No harm, boys, harm! No harm, boys, harm!
And a drop of two of cider will do us no harm!
Refrain.

Kentucky Wassail

Traditional Appalachian

Wassail, wassail, all over the town!
Our cup is white and our ale is brown.
The cup is made of the old oak tree,
And the ale is made in Kentucky.
So it's joy be to you, and a jolly wassail!

Oh, good man and good wife, are you within?
Pray lift the latch and let us come in.
We see you a-sitting at the boot o' the fire,
Not a-thinkin' of us in the mud and the mire.
So it's joy be to you, and a jolly wassail!

There was an old maid and she lived in a house,
And she had for a pet a tiny wee mouse,
Oh, the house had a stove and the house was warm,
And a little bit of liquor won't do no harm!
So it's joy be to you, and a jolly wassail!

Oh, a man in York drank his sack from a pail,
But all we ask is a wee wassail.
Oh, husband and wife, alack, we part,
God bless this house from the bottom of our heart!
So it's joy be to you, AND A JOLLY WASSAIL!