

Welcome Yule

a midwinter celebration

*Music, Dance, Songs and Stories
To Drive the Dark Away*



A Virtual Celebration of the Season
featuring
Performances From the Archives

Opening online
December 10th, 2021
www.welcomeyule.org

in cooperation with
Shea Theater Arts Center
Turners Falls, Massachusetts



NOTES from the Artistic Directors

For over 35 years, "Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration" has welcomed the holiday season to the Pioneer Valley with a collection of wassails, carols, dances, tunes, and traditional stories, drawn mainly from the midwinter traditions of Britain and northern European countries.

In this second year of Covid, we wanted to ensure that our audiences could still celebrate the transition of the seasons as they have done with us for many years, and to remind them that brighter times are on the horizon.

The overarching concept of Welcome Yule has always been the death of the old year and the rebirth of the new year. In that spirit, we have chosen songs, stories, and dances as we would for a live show, portraying the transition from feasting and celebration for the solstice in the first act, to the early days of winter as the sun slowly grows noticeably brighter in the second act.

By selecting performances from our 30-year archive, we included as many cast members as possible. We're sure we didn't capture everyone who participated in the shows, but there've been more than 300 people over the years. Some of the individual video-captures are not technically perfect, but we felt each performance was the best one for this new show.

Alan McArdle coined our motto, "Never knowingly over rehearsed." Nevertheless, we have been told by many in our audience that, though not perfect, Welcome Yule has such a strong sense of joy and commitment to community spirit that it is the perfect opening for the midwinter holiday season. We've tried to capture that spirit here.

We hope you enjoy the beginning of your holiday season by watching our company--your friends and neighbors--perform the numbers you have come to love over the last 35 years. With the caveat that time can be bent, a performer might be a child in one number, then an adult in another, and a short time later, be a child again.

Sit back and enjoy, Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration, 2021 in the comfort of your own home.

Wassail! - Jinny, Rita and Alan

Act I

Chant for the Seasons: Lorelle, Jan, Paul, Martin, Mary's puppets (1995)

A Czech folksong, with words by Mark L. Belletini.

Milford: Chorus (1995)

Words by John Stephenson, 1760. A shape note hymn from the Sacred Harp.

Rolling Downward: Geoff and Chorus (2012)

Robert Lowry, new verse by Geoff Rogers. This American hymn has become part of the Yorkshire pub caroling tradition.

Apple Tree Wassail: Liz, Carol P., Jan, Geoff, Tom H. (2001)

Traditional. A song from the Somerset region of England that toasts apple trees, and encourages them to bear a bountiful crop of apples in the coming year.

Shortest Day: Ed Smith (2013)

A poem celebrating the winter solstice written by Susan Cooper and used with permission of Revels, Inc.

Furry Day: Chorus (2014)

A traditional English wassailing carol, and a long-time favorite of Welcome Yule. We invite you to join in the chorus - Words are in the program.

Community Dance: (2013)

Schottische, music by David Kaynor. The revelers dance a lively schottische while awaiting the arrival of the Yule log.

The North Wind Doth Blow: Children (2010)

We learn how the animals of the woods prepare for the coming of winter.

The Christmas Song: Rose, Colin, Owen (2009)

Traditional. A tune collected and sung by the legendary Copper family of Rottingdean, England. The lyrics are derived from a poem written in the 1700's by Thomas Brerewood of Horton, Cheshire.

The Holly and the Ivy: Chorus (1999)

This popular Christian hymn shows how the pagan symbols of the holly and ivy were easily transformed from one belief to another.

Story: Two Pine Cones: Norah (2001)

This story is adapted from a Finnish folk tale. Librarian Lester Scafidi helped unearth this treasure.

Praise of Christmas: Hattie, Rachel, Bob, Alan, Tom S., Joli, Saralinda (2014)

Traditional. This 18th-century carol commends the season as a time of merriment and conviviality as we sing "carols and songs, to drive the cold winter away".

Wren Song: Children, Rose, Steve (1996)

Wrenning is a British Isles tradition, a remnant of a seasonal ritual involving the capture and sacrifice of a King. On St. Stephen's Day, children in Ireland and the UK would capture a wren and parade it door to door, demanding money for the effort.

Men's Wren Song: Michael, Alan, Bart, Fred, Geoff (2009)

The hunting of the wren is a custom throughout the British Isles and Ireland. Some songs, like this version, elaborately describe the hunt and its aftermath.

Mummers Play: St. George and the Dragon: Lou, Alan, Bart, Jinny, Joan, Jim B., Andy (1999)

The mummers' play is a folk drama performed with light-hearted humor. A character is slain then brought to life again, symbolizing the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. Variations are performed in France, Ireland and as far away as Newfoundland.

Gloucestershire Wassail: Chorus (2005)

Traditional. A midwinter toast raised to cows, horses, corn, beer, butlers and maids, wishing them "Wassail", or "Be in good health" Join us for the refrain— words in the program.

Act II

Border Morris: The Blue Willies (2013)


Border dances are part of the British Isles dance traditions, performed in winter for fun, strong ale and a bit of money.

John Ball: Chorus (2014)

Sydney Carter. The women lead this song honoring a 14th century visionary who organized an agricultural collective where all were equal in fellowship and in land ownership.

Gower Wassail: Chorus (1991)

This Welsh wassail from the town of Gower provides us with yet another opportunity to celebrate apple trees, cider and neighbors.



Fellsway: Chorus (2001)

David Gay. A contemplative analogy comparing trees in winter with our spiritual trials. From the first edition of *Northern Harmony*.

In The Bleak Winter: Montserrat, Saralinda, Julie, Carol, Andy, DJ, Dan, Rick (2009)

Lyrics by Christina Rossetti, music by Gustav Holst. The song's evocative poetry and music have made this a perennial favorite.

Bells in the High Tower: Chorus (1994)

Hungarian carol. Words by Howard Box. Bells ring out for the coming of each season in its turn.

Abbotts Bromley Horn Dance: Juggler Meadow Morris Men (2006)

This ancient ritual dance was first chronicled in Staffordshire England over 600 years ago. Carbon dating of the antlers associated with this dance indicated that they were from the 12th century.

Been a While Wandering: Children (2016)

Traditional, arr by Marshall Barron. Also known as "The Yorkshire Was-sail Song", the wandering street "waits" (carolers) bring Christmas Eve greetings to neighbors and friends as they "travel far and wide".

Story: How the Sun Was Stolen... Talon (2018)

A solstice allegory—the sun is stolen from the sky, but is returned to warm the earth once again.

Jolly Old Hawk: Chorus (1998)

A very short counting song featuring animals and a bit of a contest.

Orkney New Year's Carol: Geoff, Chorus (2011)

Traditional. A midwinter carol sung by groups of revelers going from house to house on the first day of the year.

Carol of the Birds: Children (1997)

Words and Music by John Jacob Niles

See the Sun A-rising: Chorus (2016)

A simple rousing tune that greets the dawn of the first day of winter. We sing it here as a round.

Personent Hodie: (2013)

Traditional. Arranged for unison voices by Gustav Holst in 1916, this Christmas carol was originally published in 1582 in the Finnish song book *Piae Cantiones*. Sung here to accompany a somber molly dance.

Rag Dance Song: Saralinda, Chorus. (2013)

This lively call and response tune, also known as *Le Guignollee*, depicts a medieval French New Year's Eve custom that has been transported to the Americas, featuring travelers going door to door begging for treats in midwinter.

Hail, Smiling Morn: Chorus (2009)

Reginald Spofforth, 1810. A rousing song that has become part of the Yorkshire pub caroling tradition.

The King: Chorus (2016)

Traditional. Our annual ode to the lowly wren, the King of all birds, . Sung on St. Stephen's day to commemorate the ancient custom of wrenning. Words in the program—join us!

Curtain Call: Chorus and musicians, Everyone. (2006)

All songs traditional except as noted

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WORDS TO THE SONGS

Sing along!

FURRY DAY CAROL (Refrain)

With hal and toe, sing merry-o,
With hal and toe sing merry!
With hal and toe sing merry-o,
With hal and toe sing merry!

GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL (Refrain)

Drink to thee! Drink to thee!
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink to thee!

THE KING (All of it!)

Joy, health, love and peace	We have traveled many miles,
Be all here in this place,	Over hedges and stiles,
By your leave, we will sing,	In search of our king,
Concerning our king.	Unto you we bring.

Our king is well dressed,	We have powder and shot,*
In silks of the best,	To conquer the lot,
In ribbons so rare,	We have cannon and ball
No king can compare.	To conquer them all.

Old Christmas is past,
Twelfth night is the last
And we bid you adieu,
Great joy to the new.

**Stomp your foot here!*



THE SHORTEST DAY

SUSAN COOPER

*Every year we recite this wonderful poem that
inspires our shows and reminds us to welcome the
dark time of year with hope.*

So the shortest day came, and the year died,
And everywhere down the centuries of the
snow-white world
Came people singing, dancing,
to drive the dark away.

They lighted candles in the winter trees;
They hung their homes with evergreen;
They burned beseeching fires all night long
To keep the year alive,
And when the new year's sunshine blazed
awake
They shouted, reveling.

Through all the frosty ages you can hear them
Echoing behind us – Listen!!

All the long echoes sing the same delight
This shortest day.
As promise wakens in the sleeping land:
They carol, feast, give thanks,
And dearly love their friends,
And hope for peace.

And so do we, here, now,
This year and every year.

Welcome Yule!!

