

# WASSAIL!

“Greetings and Well met! Enter as friends, family, and neighbors  
Our hall now glittering with winter’s green boughs.  
With singing voices and ready for revels,  
Together we’ll usher in this blessed Christmas time;  
Awake the festivities of yore!”

**Sondra Bromka:** vocals, hammered dulcimer, recorders, accordéon,  
shalmei, whistle, celtic harp, bodhran and other  
percussion

**John Bromka:** vocals, mandocello, Irish cittern, lute, viola da  
gamba, portative organ, recorders, hurdy gurdy, alto  
and tenor shawms, curtal, guitars, gemshorn  
*with*  
Cynthia Skafidas, Ruth Lord: harpsichords  
Richard Sherman: violin  
Gayle Ross, vocal  
Phil Eisenman, vocal

**Wassail:** from the Anglo-Saxon toast and blessing *Wes Thu Hal!*  
or Be Thou of Health! *Wassail* is also a Yuletide draught of beer,  
brandy, hard cider, spices, roasted apples, bread, cream, and  
whipped eggs eventually finding their way into the wooden *wassail*  
*bowl* through the course of an evening’s *wassailing* or caroling  
door to door. And just as the *wassailers* ask a taste and offer a taste,  
we’d like to thank all of you for making this present labor of love  
possible. Wassail!

## *With Gratitude & Thanks to:*

Our parents, who first taught us about Christmas; Dominic  
Yacobucci, Robin Blakeman, Paul Kunkel of the Poolville  
Country Store in Poolville, NY--- our first Christmas patrons,  
long-time friends, hosts, restaurateurs extraordinairs, and  
keepers of a fine walk-in fireplace for travels through blizzards;  
G. Burton Harbison who gave a forum for many of these  
musical arrangements to take shape; singers John Roberts and  
Tony Barrand, for their inspiration, generosity, and  
encouragement; Wayne Leupold and Robert Capen, for  
engendering possibilities; Joe Weinberg and Merle Hoesley for  
their annual Wassail Night syllabubs of brandy, cream, egg-  
white clouds; and our longtime wassailing friends Roberta,  
Frank, Kate, Connie, *and to all of our musical comrades through  
the years.*

Recorded to 8-track analog tape 1987-1993.

Stereo mix-down to digital audio tape November 1993.

Recording and mix-down engineer: John Bromka, Millefolia  
Studios.

Artwork: Sondra Bromka

Arranged and Produced by John & Sondra Bromka. All rights  
reserved.

If you would like to write us, or would like to order further  
copies of this or other CD recordings by Bells & Motley  
Consort, send check or cash \$15.00 + shipping to:

## **Millefolia Music**

**Sondra Bromka, John Bromka**

**2 North Street, Marcellus, NY 13108, USA**

**Phone: 315-673-2995**

**[bellsandmotley@earthlink.net](mailto:bellsandmotley@earthlink.net)**

**[www.bellsandmotley.com](http://www.bellsandmotley.com)**

1. **Drive the Cold Winter Away.** An English carol from the late 17th century, published for the first time in Thomas Durfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* of 1719. The tune appears with its own special set-dance instructions in John Playford's *English Dancing Master* of 1651 *Mandocello, accordéon, viol da gamba, with Ruth Lord harpsichord, Richard Sherman violin.*
2. **Pat-a-pan.** Originally a Burgundian noel from the collection of Bernard de la Monnoye, 1641-1728. Sondra arranged the music and compiled a new translation of the French in 1983 *Bodhran, whistle, accordéon, recorder, shalmel, alto shawm.*
3. **Gabriel Fram Even King/Angelus ad Virginem.** The tune and poem of Gabriel/Angelus date from the late 13th century. In *The Canterbury Tales*, which Chaucer wrote between 1387 and his death in 1400, the clerk Nicholas is mentioned singing this popular carol. We sing in both of the carol's original languages of Latin and Middle English. The 3-voice setting we use here comes from the 'Dublin Troper', a manuscript of the early 14th century from St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. We are fortunate the book was not lost to the cathedral's great fire of 1731. *Cittern, recorders, tenor viol, portative organ.*
4. **Good King Wenceslas.** These verses are in the older ballad style, written by J.M. Neale in 1853. The melody seems to trace back to the medieval *Song of the Ass*, in celebration of the donkey who served the Holy Family. *Hurdy gurdy, harpsichord, and viola da gamba.*
5. **Melchior et Balthazar.**  
*Melchior and Balthazar Came from Africa, with King Gaspar. When they came to Bethlehem they unpacked their hampers, and their mannequin.  
Like 3 starved & hungry wolves, they ate all their soup, and it was cabbage soup.*  
For years we puzzled over what the Wise Men in this obscure French folk carol were doing with a mannequin; dictionaries only gave us wilder guesses about dwarfs, while French friends guessed mannequin was a misspelling for "little baskets". Chance browsing at Syracuse University's Byrd Library revealed a slim volume entitled *The Magic Mandrake Root*. For centuries the magi and other astrologers of the East have prized the mandrake root of human form, the *mannekin*(!), as an aid in divination, dowsing, and the finding of hidden treasure. Between the star and the mandrake root, the Magi were ready for anything on heaven or earth. The song's repeat scheme belies its origin as a French Carol in the truest sense- a song to be danced to! *Accordéon, dumbec, shawm, zils.*
6. **Lullay, Lullay: Als I lay on Yoolis Night.** This carol appears for the first time in a manuscript set to page by the Franciscan friar John of Grimestone in 1372. Sondra sings a version close to the carol's original language, an emergent form of English from the Northeast Midlands. The language could date this carol as early as 1350. *Hammered dulcimer, viols, sonnerie virtuelle.*
7. **As It Fell on a Holly Eve.** Anthony Holborne, 1599. John wrote additional harmonies to go with the original lute piece. *Lute, 12-string guitar, portative organ, sonnerie virtuelle.*
8. **Make We Merry Both More and Less.** The text comes to us from the personal diary of Richard Hill, greengrocer, sandwiched in between recipes, riddles, & other accounts of the year 1500. Martin Shaw wrote the melody in 1926 and John rearranged it for a theatre piece in 1986. *Bodhran, cittern, recorder, Spanish guitar, and virtual brass choir, with Richard Sherman, violin.*
9. **The Boar's Head Fanfare.** Ever since that nameless young medieval scholar saved himself from the rampages of that ferocious sovereign of evil and things dark by ceremoniously showing a book of Aristotle down the boar's throat, students of Queen's College, Oxford, have celebrated their Christmas feast with the singing of the Boar's Head Carol. Wynken de Worde was the first to write the words down, in 1521. Sondra wrote this ceremonial version for Syracuse University in 1988. *Sopranino, alto, and tenor shawms, bass curtal, tabor drum, brass choir, and Gayle Ross & Phil Eisenman, singers.*
10. **Masters in this Hall.** The tune is of an ancient French carol, with new lyrics written c.1860 by William Morris, the famous London fabric designer, Medievalist, and champion of the Pre-Raphaelite art movement. Who else could have had so much fun with grammar as to come up with a word like *holpen*, harking back to an archaic form of English. *Accordéon, mandocello, and recorder, with Richard Sherman, violin.*
11. **Heigh Ho Holiday.** Anthony Holborne. A version for solo lute, surviving in manuscript in *John Welde's Lute Book* of Holborne's era, is here followed by Holborne's published 5 part arrangement. *Lute, pennywhistles, consort of recorders, tabor drums, tympani.*
12. **Somerset Wassail.** We first heard this from the singing of John Roberts and Tony Barrand. Cecil Sharp collected this carol from the Drayton wassailers in Somerset around 1908. It's one of our favorites when we wassail the streets with our friends, of a night that eagerly awaits for Christmas magic to appear. Snowbound nights or balmy, each door a marvel and mystery. With often a toast from a stranger, our hearts are but so much kindling, a fragrant wreath of smoke to greet the fresh falling snow. *Hammered dulcimer, mandocello, portative organ, viola da gamba, tenor recorder, gemsborn, sonnerie.*
13. **Gower Wassail.** We learned this from a field recording made by Peter Kennedy sometime before 1960 in Padstow, Cornwall of singer Charlie Bate- a very old man. Lots of fun trying to transcribe this already quirky dorian modality from Charlie's wandering tonality. Sondra & John wrote descant & choral parts in 1986. *Cittern, harpsichord, alto & tenor Renaissance recorders, virtual strings...and a Merry Christmas to Thee-- Sondra & John Bromka*