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For Immediate Release

Washington Revels Re-Creates Outdoor May Day Festival as Virtual Celebration

Glen Echo, MD, May 4, 2021 – Washington Revels captures the energy of an open-air festival of springtime music, dance, and stories with [“Celebration of Spring!”](#) Releasing on May 22, this video performance takes the audience inside the **May Day traditions** celebrated by Washington Revels for over 35 years in its annual outdoor [May Revels](#) production in DC. The hybrid event will feature joyful songs, dances, and stories performed by the **Washington Revels Chorus** of all ages, filmed outside against the beautiful backdrop of spring and offered **free on-demand** to viewers throughout the DC region and to a growing international audience.

After months of live Zoom programming, including last December’s successful [Winter Solstice Revels](#), the Washington Revels artistic team opted to take advantage of warming weather, rising vaccination rates, and new outdoor safety guidelines to move away from choral performances by musicians in individual “boxes.” Filming at historic **Glen Echo Park**, Revels has created a performance experience that was both satisfying and safe for its performers and volunteers, and that can still be freely enjoyed by a wide audience.

“While all of us in the Revels community were excited to be together outside for the first time in over a year, we were very careful in planning for health and safety,” says **producing director Colin K. Bills**. “Everyone involved in the filming observed COVID-19 prevention protocols: maintaining social distancing and wearing masks throughout the production. Besides the safety of our participants, we also believed it was important to continue to model these precautions as we all hope that the end of the pandemic is in sight.”

“We are excited to have finally broken out of the ‘virtual choir boxes’ to create something closer to a live May Revels celebration,” says **music director Elizabeth Fulford**. Adds **assistant music director Evanne Browne**, “We rehearsed and recorded the audio individually, as we did for our December holiday production, but this time we enriched the performer experience: we gathered for an in-person procession, we formed a circle of song (while lip-synching for safety), and we enjoyed the lush green beauty of Glen Echo Park.” Elizabeth Fulford sums things up: “This May, we had the experience of not only seeing each other again for the first time, but of acting together, dancing together—in short, reveling together.”

Replacing Zoom boxes, the Revels camera will transport viewers out of their “seats” and into the center of the Springtime fun with a “Reveler’s-eye” view of a **boisterous procession** through Glen Echo, complete with rousing music by **local folk musician Jennifer Cutting** and Revels’ (in)famous **“Noisey Band.”**

The [Washington Revels Jubilee Voices](#) welcomes the audience to the festivities with drumming and dancing in the West African greeting song *Funga Alafia* — in true Revels fashion, the audience is encouraged to sing along.

As with most Washington Revels programs, there will be fun for all ages, led by performers of all ages! The Teen Chorus has been rehearsing a **springtime Mummers’ play of their own creation**, celebrating the seasons with Winter, Spring and Summer Monarchs, accompanied by their court Fools — a modern update to the May Day tradition of crowning of a May Queen. And the May Children will **sing** and **sign** (in American Sign Language) the Ella Jenkins children’s favorite, *You’ll Sing a Song and I’ll Sing a Song*.

More *May Revels* traditions featured in “Celebration of Spring!” include the timeless songs *Country Life* and *Wild Mountain Thyme*, performed by the Washington Revels Chorus and set in the nature they honor. And the audience-favorite *Rattlin’ Bog* — a fast-paced musical memory challenge — will come to life as a “flash mob,” featuring **local folk singer Steve Winick**, accompanied by **Jennifer Cutting**. The Revels community dares the audience to keep up with all the words as they sing along from home.

Finally, every spring festival needs a **colorful Maypole dance**. This year, families and pods of Revelers filmed themselves winding the intricate ribbon patterns in their backyards — including Revels friends and frequent collaborators **Mark Jaster, Sabrina Mandell**, and their **Happenstance Theater** colleagues.

“Celebration of Spring!” will be **available to watch on demand from May 22–June 5**. Tickets are free by online registration and donations are encouraged. [Registration is open](#) and anyone who wants to enjoy the video release must **register by May 31**.

Founded in 1983, Washington Revels is a multi-generational performing arts community of professionals and nonprofessionals that presents traditional music, dance, storytelling, and drama in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. It includes four [performing ensembles](#) — Gallery Voices, Heritage Voices, Jubilee Voices, and Maritime Voices — and produces after-school workshops, community participation events, service events, and performances year round, including *May Revels* each spring and [The Christmas Revels](#) each December.

Spring Season of Reveling

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“Celebration of Spring!”

On-Demand from May 22–June 5
Free! Register online by May 31
Info & Tickets: <https://bit.ly/spring-revels>

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