

2019 *Christmas Revels* Media Kit

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For Immediate Release

The 2019 *Christmas Revels* Puts the Power of Community Celebration on Display

Silver Spring, MD, October 23, 2019 – Washington Revels will present the 37th annual production of *The Christmas Revels* in eight performances from December 7-15 at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium in downtown Washington, DC.

The Christmas Revels: "Celestial Fools" will transport audiences to a rustic European village nestled somewhere in the mists of time. As the winter days grow short, three wandering performers arrive from far-off lands, weaving music, dances, and stories from their cultures into an enchanting and dramatic tale of the Winter Solstice. But when the sun finally sets on the longest night — *and darkness seems to stretch on without end* — these "Celestial Fools" embark on a journey into the heavens to reclaim the light and restore its warmth to the world.

One of Washington Revels' most beloved holiday shows, "Celestial Fools" is a winter fable that illustrates the influence of Middle Eastern and Asian cultures on Europe prior to the Renaissance. Last staged in 1999, the remount updates the production for a new millennium, featuring tradition bearers **Karim Nagi** (Arabic drumming & dance), **Shizumi Shigeto Manale** (Japanese dance & theater), and **Mark Novak** (Jewish song) as the titular trio. They are joined by renowned Klezmer and world music instrumentalists **Seth Kibel** (clarinet & flute), **Vladimir Fridman** (guitar), and **Bob Abbott** (string bass), who will enliven this exuberant blend of music, dance, and story from across the centuries and around the globe. Washington Revels' cast of over 100, ages 9-90, knits the production together, living out the experience of the villagers as they welcome the three "Fools" with boisterous songs and dances from many cultures.

Washington Revels invites everyone to join the 10,000 theater-goers who come each year to celebrate with seasonal traditions like a mad-cap **Twelve Days of Christmas**, the **lighting of the Hanukkah menorah**, and a **round for peace sung in Arabic and Hebrew**, along with timeless Revels favorites: rousing **carol sing-alongs** and **dancing in the aisles** with the audience, **children's singing games**, the iconic poem "**The Shortest Day**," and the glorious tones of the **Washington Revels Brass**.

Combining elements of a fully staged holiday play, a choral concert with sing-alongs, and centuries-old winter traditions, *The Christmas Revels* offers a trademark blend of professional entertainment and community engagement that reminds performers and audiences alike of the importance — and the joy — of shared celebration.

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 produces after-school workshops, community participation events, and performances year round, including *May Revels* each Spring and *The Christmas Revels* each December.

FOR CRAFTING FUN STORIES

December 2019

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W A S H I N G T O N

REVELS

Community. Tradition. Celebration!

GREAT COMMUNITY INTEREST STORIES WITH *THE CHRISTMAS REVELS*

Themes include: Community, Tradition, Celebration, Multicultural, Audience Participation, Intergenerational, Outreach, Family, and more!

- Our 2019 “Celestial Fools” production is a fable emphasizing the importance of sharing cultural traditions, featuring music, dances, and stories from Arab, Jewish, and Japanese traditions in addition to holiday favorites. Guest artists, tradition bearers, and cultural emissaries **Karim Nagi, Mark Novak, and Shizumi Shigeto Manale** portray a trio of wandering performers who arrive in a rustic medieval European village to share their cultural riches and, in the process, open the villagers' eyes to new ideas from the Middle East and Asia. This Fall, our cast has lived out the experience of the villagers, learning from our guest performers as they have worked together to bring this show to life.
- The Children’s Chorus on stage with their "Grandparents." All the world's a stage, and all the stage is a family. The kids in the Children’s Chorus are part of meaningful stage families — moms, dads, siblings, grandparents. It's just one of the ways we create a real, intergenerational community.
- Speaking of intergenerational, did we mention that we have three generations from one family in this year's cast? It's a great example of the importance of family traditions in the performing arts!
- Our kid and teen casts hail from 18 different schools (public, private, and homeschoilers) and from all around the DMV. Kids (grades 3-5) and teens (grades 9-12) have different interests, but they come together to be part of this show for some of the same, and some different, reasons. Chat with a remarkably unique and eloquent, yet surprisingly every-day, bunch of kids!
- The night before the show opens, the cast performs for free for over 1,000 people — school children, seniors, and others who otherwise would not have the resources or the opportunity to attend.

High-quality images of this and previous Christmas Revels shows are available.

Revels is a national organization, with 9 Revels cities across the country. Washington Revels, founded in 1983, presents seasonal and traditional celebrations around the year, including The Christmas Revels, May Revels, five year-round performing ensembles, monthly community sings, parades, after-school workshops and more. Learn more at www.revelsdc.org.

2019 Guest Artists



Karim Nagi (The Sun Fool)

Karim Nagi is a native Egyptian immigrant to the USA and a true crossover artist uniting the Arab tradition with the global contemporary world. He has released 14 CDs, ranging from traditional Arab music to fusion and electronica. He has authored instructional DVDs for the Tabla/Doumbek, Riqq tambourine, Maqam and Taqsim, Finger Cymbals, Drum Solo for Dance, and Arab Folk Dance. As a dance and drum teacher, Nagi has taught at dozens of festivals in the US, Asia, Europe and Cairo, as well as most major Arab Culture festivals in the US.

He taught at the New England Conservatory of Music for 5 years, and has lectured and presented at numerous US colleges and universities. He has also lectured internationally on arts and diversity at universities in Taiwan, China, and Ecuador. Nagi's *Arabiqa* program has conducted over 400 school assemblies across America, exposing young audiences to Arab traditional arts.

His most recent project, "Detour Guide," incorporates English language storytelling with Arab music and rhythm, along with graphic and video art, to describe the experience of Arabs' life and culture. Recently Nagi received a Doris Duke Grant for the Islamic Arts through the Virginia Tech "Salaam" project. He has also just been elected to the board of directors for Chamber Music America.



Shizumi Shigeto Manale (The Moon Fool)

Born in Hiroshima and raised in Osaka Japan, **Shizumi Shigeto Manale**'s numerous artistic endeavors are dedicated to promoting multicultural understanding and acceptance.

A world-renowned and highly awarded dancer, choreographer, author, director, and film producer, Manale founded *Shizumi Dance Theatre* in 1985 and, from 2000-2015, directed the children's dance company *Shizumi Kodomo Dance Troupe*, which

performed for President Clinton at the White House's Millennium Celebrations. She also wrote and choreographed a joint United States-Japan musical theater production for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at Gallaudet University.

Manale served as the artistic director of the National Cherry Blossom Festival's opening ceremonies for seven years.

Other notable projects include the documentary films *Geisha: An Artist's Journey*, broadcast by PBS, and *Pictures from a Hiroshima Schoolyard*, about the friendship between Hiroshima children and American civilians in the aftermath of the atom bomb. The film was shown President Obama's 2015 visit to Japan and it was recently screened at a UN Peace Conference this past October. In 2014 she authored the related English-language book *Running with Cosmos Flowers*, published by Pelican Publishing Co.

Classically trained in Noh and Kyogen theater and Jiuta-mai dance, Manale also studied modern dance at the University of California-Berkeley, creative performing arts at San Francisco State University, and classical ballet at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance.



Mark Novak (The Stars Fool)

Mark Novak is a rabbi, storyteller, musician, writer, composer, father, and avid Washington Nationals fanatic. He is founder and spiritual guide of Minyan Oneg Shabbat, Washington DC's Jewish Renewal gathering, and co-founder of The MultiFaith Storytelling Institute, whose mission is to change the world one story at a time. Mark thanks Washington Revels Artistic

Director, Roberta Gasbarre, for nudging him until he said "Yes" to joining the 2019 *Christmas Revels* production!

Learn more about Mark at one or more of his many websites:
RebMarko.com; MultifaithStorytelling.org; JewishStorytelling.com;
MarkNovakBand.com; and MinyanOnegShabbat.org.



Seth Kibel (Clarinet/Flute)

Seth Kibel is one of the Mid-Atlantic's premier woodwind specialists, working with some of the best bands in klezmer, jazz, swing, and more. Wowing audiences on clarinet, saxophone, and flute, Seth has made a name for himself in the Washington/Baltimore region and beyond. He

has been the featured performer with The Kleztet, Bay Jazz Project, Music Pilgrim Trio, The Natty Beaux, and more. Seth is the winner of 28 Washington Area Music Awards (Wammies), including "Best World Music Instrumentalist" (2003-11) and "Best Jazz Instrumentalist" (2005, 2007-8, 2011-14). His most recent recording, *No Words — Instrumental Jazz & Klezmer by Seth Kibel*, was released in 2015 on the Azalea City Recordings label. One song from that album, "New Waltz," was the Grand Prize winner of the 2016 Mid-Atlantic Song

Contest (MASC), sponsored by the Songwriters' Association of Washington (SAW).



Vladimir Fridman (Guitar)

Vladimir Fridman was born and raised in Moscow, Russia. Trained in both music and civil engineering, he decided to pursue his real passion — guitar. Soon he was well known in Moscow's musical community and performed in theaters, with orchestras, and on Russian TV. As an active member of the eccentric show group Jazz Balalaika, Vladimir toured Europe, the Middle East, and Japan and released 4 albums.

Audiences in many countries have enjoyed his scintillating concert performances.

Since his arrival in the United States in 1998, Vladimir has become widely known in music circles within the greater Washington area. He frequently appears as a soloist, as well as with leading musicians. He is a member of two bands: Music Pilgrim Trio and TransAtlantic Duo. He can be heard on the WAMMIE Award-winning Gypsy Strings album, *Ole Guapa*.

In addition to guitar performance, Vladimir is a gifted composer — and he also runs a successful guitar studio. Many of his students have received awards at the Maryland State Guitar Competition.



Bob Abbott (String Bass)

Bob Abbott is a freelance bass player and arranger in the Mid-Atlantic region. His performance experiences range from local community festivals to performances at national political and social events and international festivals. In 2011 he had the honor of traveling and performing in Croatia and was a guest musician and judge at the Zagreb Guitar Show; in 2014 he returned to Croatia as a clinician and featured performer at the 2nd Annual River Jazz Festival. Bob is an endorsed artist for JanAid Basses, GuitarStrap.It, Acme Bass Speakers, Nitewalker Preamps, and Guardian Pro Cables.

In addition to Bob's career in music performance, he is the Guitar, Keyboard & Music Technology teacher at Arundel High School in Anne Arundel County. Bob enjoys playing in pit orchestras and has worked with many schools and community theater productions, as well as the New York-based Infinity Theater Company. He is looking forward to being part of the 2019 *Christmas Revels*.



Washington Revels Brass

The Washington Revels Brass lends its joyful, clarion sound to every *Christmas Revels* production. Current performers include trumpeters Bob Birch (director and member of the group since 1996) and Fred Marcellus, hornist Andrew Houde, and trombonists Bryan Bourne and Jeff Gaylord, with percussionist Don Spinelli. The ensemble views itself in a certain sense as a microcosm of Revels everywhere: they have their own rituals, traditions, and personality. They differ from every other part of the Revels only in that their ways are largely invisible to all but themselves. (*Photo by Ryan Maxwell Photography*)



Community. Tradition. Celebration!

About *The Christmas Revels*:

The Christmas Revels is an annual celebration that takes place every December in nine cities across the US. This colorful pageant of music, dance, and drama celebrates the winter solstice and the return of the Sun after the “shortest day,” radiating hope and joy in the renewal of life and the circle of the seasons.

The theme of each *Christmas Revels* changes every year. Washington Revels’ 37 productions have drawn on different eras and traditions from many cultures including Celtic, English, French, Russian, Roma, African-American, Bulgarian, Greek, Nordic, American Appalachian, Native American, Italian, Québécois, Andalusian (Jewish, Muslim and Spanish traditions), Irish, and more.

Professionally staged and directed, each production creates an on-stage community combining adults, teens, and children together with professional actors and musicians. Most shows also feature “tradition-bearers” (performers whose lineage and teachings are from the culture(s) being celebrated that year). Audience participation is a hallmark of every production: whether singing carols, joining hands in a rousing line dance, or becoming part of the drama, the audience is always an integral part of the Revels community.

The Christmas Revels appeals to the community at large, young and old alike, regardless of background. Each December, tens of thousands of people around the country attend *Christmas Revels* performances in nine cities — over 10,000 see the Washington Revels show alone — satisfying a deep human need to come together in communal celebration.

Washington Revels, founded in 1983, presents seasonal and traditional celebrations throughout the year, including *The Christmas Revels*, May Revels, monthly community sings and dances, parades, concerts, after-school workshops, and much more, for a total of over 50 programs annually.

- For more information about *The Christmas Revels*: www.revelsdc.org/shows-events/christmas-revels/
- For a preview video of Revels traditions featured in this year's production: <https://youtu.be/UAZKJVrAtkc>
- For more information about Washington Revels: www.revelsdc.org/
- For a 3-minute video *This is Washington Revels*: [www.youtu.be/1_rEjpKe7b0](https://youtu.be/1_rEjpKe7b0)
- To find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/revelsdc
- To find us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/revelsdc
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- Public contact: Washington Revels, info@revelsdc.org / 301-587-3835

A HISTORY OF *THE CHRISTMAS REVELS*



1983	Medieval
1984	Medieval--Haddon Hall
1985	Appalachian-American
1986	French
1987	Celtic
1988	Medieval
1989	Storybook
1990	Medieval
1991	Russian-American
1992	Celestial Fools
1993	Celtic
1994	Victorian
1995	French
1996	Northlands
1997	Medieval--King and the Fool
1998	Shepherd Alley: Washington, D.C.
1999	Celestial Fools
2000	Celtic
2001	Leonardo's Workshop – Italian Renaissance
2002	Victorian
2003	Roads of the Roma
2004	King and the Fool
2005	Northlands
2006	Early American
2007	Elizabethan (25th Anniversary)
2008	French Canadian (<i>Québécois</i>)
2009	Leonardo's Workshop – Italian Renaissance
2010	Thomas Hardy/Wessex
2011	Andalusian Treasures
2012	Haddon Hall (30th Anniversary)
2013	Echoes of Thrace (Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey)
2014	Irish Immigrant
2015	Medieval/Woodland
2016	Nordic
2017	French-Canadian (<i>Québécois</i>, 35th Anniversary)
2018	Elizabethan
2019	Celestial Fools



PRESS QUOTES

The *Christmas Revels* is a seasonal gift to the community in song, dance, magic, foolery and tradition... -THE WASHINGTON POST

...a celebration to make even the most incorrigible Grinch grin. -THE WASHINGTON POST

...reflects feelings as old as humanity itself... -THE NEW YORK TIMES

...a perfect vehicle for ushering in a magical time of year. -THE WASHINGTON POST

...revives elements of the holiday season that don't go on sale... -THE WASHINGTON POST

Revels has history, tradition, arts, color and a way of turning an audience into a community. -THE BOSTON GLOBE

Revels creates a communal bridge from darkness to light... -THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

A better evening's entertainment, with more variety and spirit, would be hard to find... -THE WASHINGTON POST

The heart of Revels is its participatory spirit, a joining together of audience members and cast in celebratory song and dance... -THE CAMBRIDGE EXPRESS

One of those rare events that delight people of all ages. -THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON REVELS

Community. Tradition. Celebration!

CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH CELEBRATION!

Through performance, education, and outreach, **Washington Revels** is dedicated to reviving, sustaining, expanding, and celebrating cultural traditions — in music, dance, storytelling, and drama — that bind people together in spirit and joy.

THE CHRISTMAS REVELS

Our flagship production features a cast of nearly 100 — professionals and volunteers, ages 5-85 — and shares **Winter traditions** from around the globe with an audience of 10,000 each December. Through our **Outreach Performance**, we provide over **1,000 free tickets** to students, seniors and other groups who could not otherwise experience this magical show.

SEASONAL PROGRAMS

- Our second largest production of the year, **May Revels** is a **free Spring celebration** that touches over **1,000 people**.
- The themes of our **monthly Community Sings** vary by season and commemorate the traditions of cultures from around the world.
- Our lively and colorful **parade performances** on Independence and Labor Day bring the joy of Revels to **thousands of DC-area residents** every summer.
- Revels' **Pub Sings** keep spirits warm in even the coldest months.

AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS

Revels Kids learn traditional games, songs, stories, and dances that instill in them the **confidence** to lead, the **respect** to listen, the importance of **teamwork**, and the **empathy** to care for others and the world around them. We offer **reduced and free tuition** for families with financial need.

YEAR-ROUND PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

Our **Gallery Voices**, **Heritage Voices**, **Jubilee Voices**, **Maritime Voices**, and **Voices of History** perform throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia, bringing traditional music and dramatic interpretations to the wider community. Most of these events are **free and open to the public**.

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WHAT OTHERS SAY...

One of those rare events that delight people of all ages.
—The Washington Post

Revels has history, tradition, art, color and a way of turning an audience into a community.
—The Boston Globe

A better evening's entertainment, with more variety and spirit, would be hard to find ... a perfect vehicle for ushering in a magical time of year.
—The Washington Post

The heart of a Revels production is its participatory spirit, a joining together of audience members and cast in celebratory song and dance...
—The Cambridge Express

The Christmas Revels, a seasonal gift to the community in song, dance, magic, foolery and tradition...
—The Washington Post



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*Revels is not something that you just watch:
it is an Experience!*