

2021 *Christmas Revels* Media Kit

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WASHINGTON
REVELS
Community.Tradition.Celebration!



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Production photos coming soon. Photos of past *Christmas Revels* available on request.

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For Immediate Release

39th *Christmas Revels* Returns with a Homegrown Show Rooted in Local History

Glen Echo, MD, November 16, 2021 – From December 10-12 and 17-19, Washington Revels brings [*The Christmas Revels*](#) back to the stage with a story rooted in the history of our region and our nation. There will be two “firsts” for audiences as this much-loved DC holiday tradition returns from COVID lockdowns: after almost 40 years, *The Christmas Revels* will be staged in a new venue — **the historic Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park** in Glen Echo, MD; and for the first time, the video of a fully staged *Christmas Revels* production will be released for audiences to watch on demand from December 21-January 6.

Featuring an all-new theme highlighting American nineteenth-century seasonal traditions, this year’s *Christmas Revels* transports audiences back to December 1870 in Washington, DC. The holidays have arrived and in the elegant parlor of **Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels** — the first African American to serve in the U.S. Congress — the household is preparing for a party! Hiram and his wife Phoebe have invited colleagues and friends from near and far to celebrate the turning of the year.

With joyous carols, traditional melodies, heartfelt spirituals and toe-tapping dances, guests from all walks of life meet under the Revels family roof. In the midst of this camaraderie the merrymakers also take care of their Yuletide community — welcoming a traveler with an urgent request, seeking out a lost love, and comforting a melancholy man longing for the joy of the season.

Together, all who enter Senator Revels’ home share the hope that long years of national struggle are in the past; remember those who have gone before; and take joy in reunion with loved ones who were separated.

After our own months apart, Washington Revels invites DC audiences to an American-themed *Christmas Revels* brimming with stories, music and dances that bring us closer. The homegrown celebration will be created by an exclusively local cast. The [Washington Revels Jubilee Voices](#), who for more than 10 years have connected African American music and traditions with the history of DC-area heritage sites, will be featured throughout the production, and Jubilee Voices founding member **Gregory McGruder** portrays Senator Revels. As always, audiences will enjoy the onstage community created by the multigenerational **Washington Revels Chorus**, joined by an on-stage “parlor band” of **area folk musicians**, and by the ever-popular **Washington Revels Brass**.

To ensure a safe experience for audience, cast and crew alike, all *Christmas Revels* performers, staff, and volunteers are vaccinated against COVID-19. Washington Revels is requiring all audience members to show proof of full vaccination or a negative test taken within 72 hours of their chosen performance, and all audience members must wear masks.

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 includes four [performing ensembles](#) — Gallery Voices, Heritage Voices, Jubilee Voices, and Maritime Voices — and produces workshops for adults and children, community participation and service events, pub sings, and performances year round. Signature programs include *The Christmas Revels* each December, [May Revels](#) each spring, and a new [Juneteenth](#) program each summer. Washington Revels is one of 13 resident arts organizations based in Glen Echo Park (glenechopark.org).

Tickets Available November 15

Tickets & Information: www.RevelsDC.org/Christmas-Revels

8 In-Person Performances

Dec. 10-12 & 17-19, Matinees & Evenings
The Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park
Glen Echo, MD

Video-on-Demand

Enjoy *The Christmas Revels* from home!
Releasing December 21
Watch anytime through January 6

*Glen Echo Park is a site owned by the National Park Service. Programs are produced in cooperation with the **Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture**, the **National Park Service**, and **Montgomery County**.*

*Washington Revels is supported in part by funding from the **Montgomery County Government** and the **Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County** and in part by the **Maryland State Arts Council** (msac.org).*

2021 Guest Artists



Greg McGruder (Hiram Rhodes Revels)

Greg McGruder has performed in Washington, DC since 1985 when he was cast in the Hexagon Club's satirical revue *Thirty Proof*. He was a founding member of the award-winning *a cappella* group Brock & the Rockets and performed with the jazz vocal quartet Love & Madness. As a solo artist he appeared at venues throughout the city, and he also worked with artist Joyce Wellman, on her multi-disciplinary project *Steal Away*, performing spirituals and giving voice to first-person stories of formerly enslaved individuals for a CD that accompanied the artist's illustrations.

He performed with award-winning singer **Donal Leace**, and on his 2002 album *Leace Renewed*. He is a founding member of the **Washington Revels Jubilee Voices** and sings with the Chancel Choir at Foundry United Methodist Church. Professionally, he has worked at the National Geographic Society for more than three decades, currently serving as director of Global Special Events. *(Photo by Riley Robinson)*



Byron Thomas (Banjo)

Byron Thomas, a native of Charles County, MD, has been playing music since about 2015 and the banjo since 2016. Byron has also played the psaltery and the lap dulcimer and currently dabbles in other string instruments such as the guitar, mandolin, lap steel guitar, and the bowed dulcimer. He loves a wide range of music and plays what sounds good to him.

Byron started playing the banjo after learning about the African American roots of the instrument. This knowledge propelled him on a personal quest to learn about how the banjo has shaped the rest of American history and the narratives that are shared today. Byron believes that the banjo has played more of a significant part of our collective history than we realize. He also feels that the banjo can be more than just a novelty instrument and that, just like the violin or guitar, it can have whatever voice one feels it should have. He has recently been learning early American music from the turn of the 20th century and mid 1800s. Byron started his public playing by working with the **Banjo Project** through the Charles County Arts Alliance.



Jubilee Voices

Founded in 2010, the **Washington Revels Jubilee Voices** is committed to the preservation of African American history and traditions. Through a *cappella* singing and spoken word, its members present songs and stories of struggle and perseverance. Performances have especially honored local heritage at area

heritage sites and at Black History Month events. Recent highlights include the Library of Congress **American Folklife Center's "Archive Challenge"** (2019), the **Commemoration of the 155th Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens** (2019), and the opening ceremonies of the National Park Service's **Frederick Douglass Bicentennial** (2018). In July 2020, Jubilee Voices marked its 10th anniversary with a month-long "Jubilee July" celebration, featuring member profiles, a series of videos, and a one-hour live virtual event. In June 2021, Jubilee Voices partnered with the Alexandria Black History Museum to present a virtual Juneteenth production titled: **"Our People: A Juneteenth Story."**



H.R.'s Own Parlour Band

Local musicians **Rebekah Givens** (fiddle, dance), **Robert LaRose** (mandolin, bones, piano), **Abbie Mulberg** (piano, flute) and **Jackie Owen** (guitar) are thrilled to be joining Washington Revels as members of Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels' parlor band. Together,

the group has over 75 years of experience playing music in a wide variety of genres. They all play in the seven-person Irish group **Whiskey Before Breakfast Band**. The band can be seen performing at local pubs and festivals throughout the DC region. Not one to quarantine quietly, Whiskey Before Breakfast Band taught themselves how to make music virtually and started **their own YouTube channel**. Soon, they're looking forward to applying everything they've learned to their first album (planning to record in 2022). But mostly, they're glad to finally be together making music again and looking forward to reveling with all of you: [YouTube.com/c/WhiskeyBeforeBreakfastBand](https://www.youtube.com/c/WhiskeyBeforeBreakfastBand) (Photo by Erin Sutherland)



Washington Revels Brass

The **Washington Revels Brass** lends its joyful, clarion sound to every *Christmas Revels* production. Current performers include **trumpeters Les Linn and Fred Marcellus** and **trombonists Bryan Bourne and Jeff Gaylord**. 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 Alain L. Gutiérrez Almeida)

WASHINGTON **About *The Christmas Revels*:**

REVELS

Community.Tradition.Celebration!

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’ 38 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 more information about Washington Revels:** www.revelsdc.org/
- **For a 3-minute video *This is Washington Revels*:** www.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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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 (25 th Anniversary)
2008	French Canadian (<i>Québécois</i>)
2009	Leonardo's Workshop – Italian Renaissance
2010	Thomas Hardy/Wessex
2011	Andalusian Treasures
2012	Haddon Hall (30 th Anniversary)
2013	Echoes of Thrace (Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey)
2014	Irish Immigrant
2015	Medieval/Woodland
2016	Nordic
2017	French-Canadian (<i>Québécois</i>)
2018	Elizabethan
2019	Celestial Fools
2020	Virtual Winter Solstice Revels



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

WWW.REVELSDC.ORG