

The Feast of Stephen

A Celebration of the Winter Solstice at the Court of Good King Wenceslas

- Prelude** *Wind Ensemble performs carols from the balcony as audience is seated*
- Processional** ***Personent Hodie*** *Concert Chorus takes places in seats; Treble Chorus takes places on stage*
- Fool** *(sweeping the stag, singing)*
 Fal de ral, de riddle al de rey do,
 Fal de ral, de riddle al de rey!
 Fal de ral, de riddle al de rey do,
 Fal lal lal lal riddle al de rey!
- (noticing Chorus, audience)*
- Oh dear, the wassailers are here, already!
 And my Lords and Ladies!
 The feast is about to begin,
 And no mummers, no dancers,
 And no King!
 Where is that Page?
- Music Master, perhaps you had best warm up the wassailers
 with a ditty whilst I, um, determine the state of preparations.
(they bow to one another)
(exiting) Page?! Where are you?!
 Where's that confounded Page? (etc.)
- TC** **Little Jack Horner**
- Fool and Page enter*
- Fool** There you are! My dear Page. *(bows)*
- Page** My Lord Fool. *(bows)*
- Fool** The wassailers and the Court have arrived for the Feast of Stephen.
 Is the kitchen ready?
- Page** The boar's head is still in the oven, I believe.
- Fool** Free range?
- Page** Of course.
- Fool** No antibiotics?

Page Indeed.

Fool Very good. Is the wassail ready?

Page The cook has just put the cider on the stove.

Fool Organic?

Page Verily.

Fool Very well then. And where is the Good King?

Page Ah, the Good King. He, ah, went to look out.

Fool He went to look out?

Page He went to look out.

Fool On the Feast of Stephen?

Page Indeed.

Fool But there's nothing but snow, round about,

Fool & Page Deep and crisp and even.

Page What with the dragon on the loose, eating his subjects left and right, I fear the Good King is anxious on account of his knights.

Fool Knowing his knights, I'd be anxious too!

Page While we wait, let us hear if the wassailers are fit to sing for the King! Music Master! Let us hear something then!

MM A New Year Carol by the most famous, the honorable Benjamin Britten.
(*bows*)

TC **A New Year Carol**

Page I believe that will do.

Fool My Lord Page! The King!

Enter GKW. CC stands, Fool and Page bow.

Page Your Majesty! The Feast is ready to begin! Where have you been?

GKW My Lord Page! We were detained by affairs of state.

Page The dragon?

GKW Indeed. But our knights have the situation well in hand, we hope. Well then! Lords and Ladies of the Court!

CC Good King Wenceslas!

GKW Our dear subjects!

TC Good King Wenceslas!

GKW Welcome to the Feast of Stephen! Tonight we celebrate the coming Winter Solstice with feasting, music, and merriment! As the longest night of the year approaches, let us be thankful for the gifts that have been given us! Together, with story and with song, we can drive the dark away! Let the festivities begin!

Page *(to audience)*
Please join us in singing the traditional carol,
Our Good King's very own,
Good King Wenceslas!

All **Good King Wenceslas**

CC sits.

Page Your majesty, what of your knights?

Fool Those who have not been eaten were to have returned for the Feast.

GKW Alas, our poor knights! They have not returned!

Fool Not even Sir Elton?

GKW Nay, nor Sir Paul.

Page Look! Here comes one of your knights now!

(Silent Knight enters, tiptoeing through house, hushing the audience, exits.)

Fool Who was that?

GKW We know not. Pray tell, who is he?

Page That, Your Majesty, is the Silent Knight.

Groans from CC, TC.

- Page** I believe, sire, that the wassail is ready to be served.
- GKW** Excellent! Let us be served! My dear wassailers, the moment has arrived! We are pleased to be entertained by your minstrelry! Bring on the wassail!
- TC** **Gloucestershire Wassail**
- GKW** Marry, this is the finest wassail we have tasted this many a year past! And better still than the wassail, the wassailers! Three cheers for our fine singers!
- CC** Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah! (*applause*)
- Fool** Your Majesty, another knight approacheth!
- KBC enters, followed by another page carrying a small Christmas tree. He gallops through the audience, calling out:*
- KBC** December 24th! December 24th! December 24th! Etc. *exits*
- GKW** What a strange fellow! How he doth carry on! We do not recognize yon knight either, pray, who is he?
- Page** That, Your Majesty, is the Knight Before Christmas...
- groans from CC, TC*
- Fool** ...and he went all through the house!
- more groans from CC, TC*
- Page** Your Majesty, The mummers have not yet arrived, but the boar's head is ready to be served!
- GKW** Blast! It will be a sorry feast if we have no mummers to play for our dessert. We hope that they have not been eaten en route. This accursed dragon hath laid waste my kingdom, eaten my knights, and now even threatens to spoil our winter solstice celebration! We had hoped to feast on dragon tail this year and dispense with the gnarly old boar's head for a change...still, a tradition is a tradition! What would the Feast of Stephen be without it?
- Page** Ummm....vegetarian?
- GKW** Indeed. Perhaps you have something there. Next year, let's have tofurkey instead. But there's no use letting all of our cook's labor go for naught. Bring on the boar's head!
- Page** Bring on the boar's head!

Interlude **Shrewsbury Lasses** (*instrumentalists*)

CC exits, TC takes places in pews vacated by CC. When CC is ready to process in...

Page Your Majesty, the boar's head!

CC **Boar's Head Carol**

CC processes in with boar's head. When carol has been sung, GKW is served and CC takes places on stage. GKW begins to 'eat'.

GKW ...and a delicious looking boar's head it is! Music Master! What entertainment has the Court prepared for our diversion this evening?

MM Our first selection is a traditional carol from Kentucky, Your Majesty.

GKW Kentucky? I have heard of it, it is nigh unto France, I believe.

MM It is my understanding that Kentucky is even closer to home than France.

GKW Indeed. Well then, carry on!

MM Thank you, Your Majesty.

Music Master readies the chorus, then just before they begin to sing...

LK (*entering at a run from the back of the hall*) Wait! Wait for me! I'm coming! And I have seen him!

GKW You have seen him? Seen who?

LK The dragon, Your Majesty, and he's coming this way!

Gasps from CC, TC

GKW Pray tell, how far off is he?

LK About a good league hence, Your Majesty.

GKW In which direction?

LK (*pointing*) That way, Your Majesty.

GKW Underneath the mountain?

LK Right against the forest fence!

CC By Saint Agnes' Fountain!

- GKW** Oh dear! We'd best carry on with our feast lest it be interrupted and the feasters become the feast itself!
- LK** *(to the Music Master)* The dragon ate my chorus folder.
- MM** Now that's an excuse I haven't heard before!
- (he gives LK a folder, and LK takes his place in the chorus)*
- GKW** Now don't tell me! Let me guess! That...is the Late Knight!
- Groans from CC, TC*
- CC** **Hush, My Babe**
- GKW** My Lords and Ladies! Thy sweet and melodious singing hath quite taken away our appetite! Truly, the taste of food pales before the splendor of such delicious music. We must partake of this feast! No longer shall we tarry at meat – tonight we dine on the concorde of sweet sounds!
- GKW takes a chorus folder from Music Master, joins the CC.*
- MM** A song in the French style by the honorable Orlandus Lassus, late of Italy and the Netherlands.
- CC** **Mon Coeur se Recommande a Vous** in French
- GKW** 'Tis a fine ditty! We must have it again! But this time in English, we'll have no more Frenchifying this night!
- CC** **Mon Coeur se Recommande a Vous** in English
- GKW** Marry, 'tis a sweet and melancholy air! What is the next course, O Music Master?
- MM** A song in Hebrew, Your Majesty. A song of peace, and of our wishes for a more harmonious world.
- CC** **Ose Shalom**
- GKW** Such delectable music is truly fit for this King! On what shall we dine next?
- MM** Your Majesty, allow me to present to you my humble offering for this evening, a setting of the famous song from As You Like It by the honorable William Shakespeare, late of London and Stradford-on-Avon.
- GKW** Ah yes, Willy the Shake, we know him well. Most appetizing!

CC **Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind**

GKW Thou hast surpassed thyself this evening, Music Master. Page?

Page Yes, Your Majesty.

GKW Be certain to set aside the leavings from the boar's head for the Music Master's dinner this night.

Page Yes, Your Majesty.

MM The last course, Your Majesty. From Spain, a traditional carol of the season.

CC **Riu, Riu, Chiu**

GKW *(Page exits to the wing; GKW steps forward from the CC)* My Lords and Ladies! Music Master! We thank you for the most satisfying feast we have devoured this many a day past! Bravo! *(leads audience applause)*

Page *(entering from wing)* Your Majesty! My Lords and Ladies! The mummers! The dancers! They have arrived!

CC The mummers! Hooray! The dancers! Etc.

GKW *(taking his seat)* My Lords and Ladies, pray, be at thy ease. *(CC sits & Mummers exit to the wing)* Now let us feast upon the frolickings and entertainments of the players for our justly earned dessert!

Enter Mummers

Mummers **Linden Corner School Mummers Play**

Dancers **Lads-a-bunch'em**

Interlude 'Thank yous'

MM recites 'The Shortest Day'

CC & TC **Masters in This Hall** (all recess)

End.

Walter Bitner, November 2006

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