

Phil Passen Library Programs

Overview – Library patrons and staff alike react with delight and enthusiasm to the mix of music and information in these programs. Because audiences are fascinated by the uncommon, trapezoidal-shaped hammered dulcimer, I intersperse information on its intriguing history throughout my performance. Afterwards, members of the audience, young and old, musicians and non-musicians, come up to take a closer look at the dulcimer and try their hand at it.

Acclaim — Selected **Best of the Best** by the Library Administrators and Coordinators of Northern Illinois. Library Program Coordinators exclaim:

“The information was fascinating...and the music was just heavenly. “

“Thank you for a delightful afternoon of music.”

“The audience members of all ages, and I, were simply delighted with your music.”

Seasonal Programs

St. Patrick's Day Program – The tunes in this program of traditional Irish music range from beautiful slow airs to rousing reels and jigs, including some very recognizable melodies such as *Irish Washerwoman* and *Danny Boy*. Also included are rousing songs such as *No Irish Need Apply*, *Johnson's Motor Car*, *Brennan on the Moor*, and ballads such as *Leaving of Liverpool*, *John O' Dreams*, and *Kilkelly, Ireland*. This is not just for St. Patrick's Day. Audiences love Irish music any time of the year!

Winter Holidays – The beautiful sound of the dulcimer is showcased in this program with traditional and modern melodies and songs celebrating Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, and the winter solstice. Beautiful tunes such as *Jesu*, *Joy of Man's Desiring* and *What Child is This?* share space with family favorites such as *Let It Snow*, *O Chanukah*, and *Here Comes Santa Claus*. An Irish Reel may make an appearance, as will a French or African carol and perhaps an old spiritual and a wintertime tune or two from somewhere else in the world. A wonderful and exciting way to hear familiar and not-so familiar holiday music!

Anytime Programs

Old-Time and Celtic Music – The lively songs and tunes in this program illustrate the relationship between traditional Irish and old-time North American music. Reels and polkas include *Miss Macleod's*, *Mason's Apron*, and *John Ryan's Polka*. Slow tunes and waltzes include *Star of the County Down* and *Down by the Sally Gardens*. Familiar melodies such as *Turkey in the Straw* and *Irish Washerwoman* and old-time songs such as *Red Rocking Chair*, *My Darling Nellie Gray*, and *Sail Away Ladies* round out this highly entertaining performance.

Old-Time American Music — American roots music shines in this program of songs and tunes running the gamut from fast and lively, to slow and lovely, to haunting and plaintive. The familiar *Turkey in the Straw* and *Arkansas Traveler* or the not so familiar *Grub Springs*, *Shove that Pig'sfoot a Little Farther into the Fire*, and *John Brown's Dream* might have some in the audience on their feet and dancing. Songs such as *Wagoner's Lad*, *Coo Coo Bird*, and *Sow 'Em on the Mountain* capture the essence of old-time music. The beautiful sound and versatility of the dulcimer shine in this captivating performance.

Songs from Carl Sandburg's American Songbag – Carl Sandburg was an avid collector of folk songs from all over the United States and performed folk songs, accompanying himself on the guitar, at his poetry readings. In 1927 he published this collection of 255 songs, with words, music, and a little history of each song. In my program I describe the book and sing songs such as *Boll Weevil*, *I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago*, *Frog Went a Courting*, *The Sloop John B*, *Red River Valley*, *C.C. Rider*, *Ain't Gonna Study War No More*, and others, all from Sandburg's book. In many cases I describe how the song evolved into a more modern, well known song. This is a great program any time, but especially appropriate in January (the month of Sandburg's birth) and April (National Poetry month).

The Music of Thomas Hardy – Novelist and poet Thomas Hardy is considered one of the greatest English-language writers, yet most lovers of English literature have no idea that he was a lover of English country dance. As a young fiddler, he accompanied his father in playing for local dances. In this program, I play music which comes from the tune books Hardy transcribed and collected. I read from his novels some short descriptions of tunes, sing songs relevant to Hardy and his work, and read *The Convergence of the Twain*, his great poem about the sinking of the Titanic. This program is particularly timely in April (National Poetry Month) and June (the month of Hardy's birth).

Music of the Civil War — The hammered dulcimer was popular in the United States during the Civil War, and music of that era seems right at home played on this unique instrument. Many tunes and songs in this program are still familiar today, such as *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*; *Home, Sweet, Home*; *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching*. Others, such as *Lorena*; *Lincoln and Liberty*; *The Battle Cry of Freedom*; *The Marching Song of the First Arkansas Regiment*; *Shiloh Hill*; and *John Brown's Dream* are less familiar but just as beautiful, rousing, and inspiring. This is a fascinating program of historical music.