# Wheel of the Year A Pagan Song Cycle 

For Choir, Soloists, Two Flutes, ‘Cello, Piano, Hand Drum, and Singing Bowl in C.

Leanne Daharja Veitch

## 2004

For Michael, Matchiko, and the Akasha Coven.

## Wheel of the Year: A Pagan Song Cycle

## Notes about the Wheel of the Year

This piece celebrates the eight holy days of the Pagan community, which are collectively known as the Wheel of the Year. All of the text and music is original and copyright to the composer, except where indicated below (**).

The Wheel of the Year: A Pagan Song Cycle also includes opening and closing movements.

## Samhain (1 May)

Samhain (pronounced saw-een) is the Pagan New Year, and it is from here that the Wheel of the Year is traditionally counted. It is a time for fireworks, sparklers and night-time celebration, and a time to both say farewell to the old year, and to welcome in the new. Thyme (associated with departed souls), rue (the flower of repentance), and rosemary (for remembrance) are the traditional herbs burned at Samhain. Samhain is also a time to remember loved ones who have passed on, and many Pagan set candles at the windows of their homes (to welcome friendly souls).

## Eucalyptus, rosemary,

Burning brightly for remembrance:
Burning bright for purity
On this night when we remember...
Once again, Shadow's Eve.
Light the candle at the window.
Set a light to guide them home
Through the darkness of the night.
Contemplate our visions,
Dreaming of times long gone:
Dreaming of our loved ones
Who have passed across our lives...
Eucalyptus, rosemary,
Burning brightly for remembrance
Burning bright for purity
On this night when we recall.

## Yule (21-22 June)

The Midwinter Solstice, when the nights are longer and the days shorter than at any other time of the year. Yule corresponds in many ways with the Northern Hemisphere Christian Christmas festival. Yule logs are burned, homes are decorated with evergreen, and gifts are given. Yule is a traditional time of feasting, and the seasonal colors are green and red. Yule was the traditional time of birth of Dionysus, Mithras and Baal. The birth of the Norse Goddess Freya was also celebrated at this time.

> Cold snow,
> lcy the winds that blow
> Cold, blow, in the dark of night.

Cold snow, icy the winds that blow
Cold, blow in the dark of night.
Icy cold wind blow, freezing winter snow
Yuletide is come!
Feel the icy breath, bitter cold of death
Yuletide is come!

Cold winter wind blowing icily.
Coldest, longest of nights.
Coldest, darkest of nights.
Drifting snowflakes on the air, blowing icily.
Twirling snowflakes on the air:
Wintertime at Yule.

## Imbolc (1 August)

Imbolc is the celebration of the imminent arrival of Spring. White and green candles are lit, homes decorated once again with garlands and fresh native flowers, and thanks is given that warmth is returning to the earth. Imbolc is a celebration of all that is fresh, new and young, and is also a celebration of the Goddess as Virgin. It is a particularly feminine festival, sacred to women.

## Ostara (21-22 September)

Corresponding with the Christian Easter (and both festivals derive their names from the Norse Fertility Goddess Eostre), Ostara is a celebration of life, and of fertility. Symbols of the Equinox include fertile animals (hence the Christian association with the rabbit) and eggs - a symbol of new life, fertility and new beginnings. Colors of the season are soft green, white, and soft yellow, and the festival is associated with Venus, the Goddess of Love.

## Beltane (31 October)

Beltane is the festival of the Sacred Marriage, and is the time of the year when sexuality and fertility are recognised and most revered. This is the festival of the Great Rite - of sexual union between Goddess and God. Beltane is the most popular time for Pagans to be handfasted (married). Sacred to Beltane is the Apple tree, and in Australia the jarrah replaces the oak as the sacred tree of this time.

Brightly the fires at Beltane burn
Rise, as the dusklight is fading
And we will dance, as we sing this song
Sing to the Lord and the Lady.

## Midsummer (21-22 December)

Midsummer is the time of the year when the days are longest and the nights shortest. The color of the season is red, representing heat and ripe fruit, and fruit is eaten in thanks, and in Australia the Sturt Desert Pea is a sacred flower of this time. Midsummer is also traditionally associated with the faery realm, and this Sabbat is preferably celebrated in the evening, with feasting, singing and dancing lasting throughout the night until dawn.
(Ding dong ding dong, midnight rising)
(Ding dong ding dong, chimes are striking)
Over hill, over dale, (Shadowy trees)
Thorough bush, thorough brier, (Whispering winds)
Over park, over pale, (Evening breeze)
Thorough flood, thorough fire, (Call Fairies in)
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cow slips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours, In those freckles live their savours: I must go seek some dew drops here, And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. (We welcome summer in!)
**The above lyrics are from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream Act II, Scene I, with the exception of bracketed text (original work).

## Lammas (2 February)

Lammas is the traditional time of Harvest, and preparation for the coming winter months. Lammas revolves around the awareness of the approach of winter, and it is the time we give thanks for the year's harvest. The name Lammas derives from the Old English Hlaf-Mass, which means 'bread feast'. Lammas is traditionally the festival where the first loaf of bread from the harvest is broken and shared in the name of the Goddess. All crops associated with bread are sacred to this time, in particular barley. The drink of the season in Australia is ice cold beer and cider.
(Hoof and horn, hoof and horn, All that dies will be reborn. Corn and grain, corn and grain, All that falls will rise again.)

Bring the crops in against the weather: Wheat and barley and hops and hay. Working, harvesting in together Celebrating Lammas today.

Night draws nearer, and wind blows colder:
Wheat and barley and hops and hay.
Gather in as the days grow shorter, Celebrating Lammas today.

Cull the last of the Summer's bounty:
Wheat and barley and hops and hay.
Welcome in Autumn's golden beauty Celebrating Lammas today.

Bid farewell to the days of Summer:
Wheat and barley and hops and hay.
Calling in the cool rains of Winter,
Celebrating Lammas today.
(Hoof and horn, hoof and horn, All that dies will be reborn.
Corn and grain, corn and grain,
All that falls will rise again)
**All text and music original, apart from bracketed text and its associated chant (traditional).

## Mabon (21-22 March)

Mabon falls at the Autumnal Equinox, when nights and days are of equal length. It is a time of balance, and a time of looking forward to and preparation for the winter. It is the second harvest, when Pagans take time to give thanks for their blessings, meditate on the joys and trials of the year past, and make plans for the year to come. At this time food is prepared for storage, jams and pickles are made, and fruit is preserved. The colors of the season are brown and gold.

Wind, fire, sea, stone
Breath, flame, wave, bone
Long light has lingered here, Earth still is warm, Deepening shadows lost by the dawn.
Long darkness rising here, though heat lingers on, Twist of the Equinox - Mabon has come.

Dead leaves fall silently, drift on the air,
Trees standing, slumbering - dry, cracked and bare.
Time passes quietly, echoing past:
Earth calls the winter in. Mabon at last!
Shadows through the mist I see:
Time passing silently.
Starlight, as the Spiral bends.
Moonlight, as the daylight ends.

## Closing the Circle

By the Earth, by all fleshly beings
By the Water, and all creatures that drink from her
By the Fire, and the shining spirits of the Bright Ones
By the Breath that gives all Life.
By Earth, by Water, by Fire and by Air
Bright Ones, depart in peace from this place.

1. Casting The Circle

2. Samhain


Pizz.

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3. Yule





## 4. Imbolc



















## 6. Beltane


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## 7. Midsummer







## 8. Lammas



Night draws nea - rer and





## 9. Mabon



Dee - pe-ning sha - dows Lost by the dawn
Long dark-ness ri - sing here Though

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daharja@tgmail.com



## 10. Closing The Circle

Freely, d = 60 approx.


Female 2 Solo

By the breath that gives all life,

Tutti


By earth, by wa-ter, by fi -re, and by air


[^0]
## 10. Closing The Circle <br> (alternative version using Eb singing bowl)

Freely, $=60$ approx.

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