

Goddess Songs

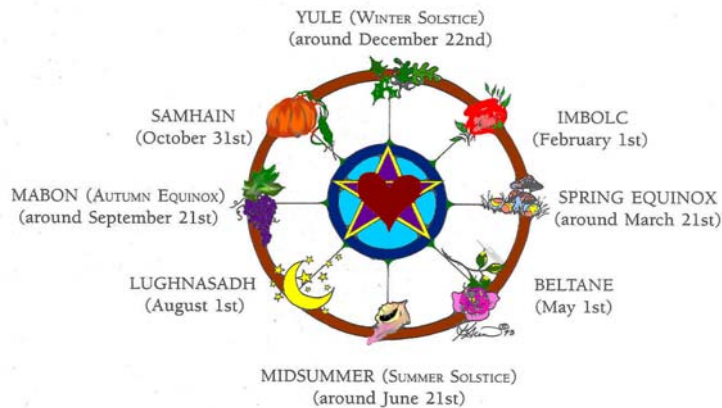
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Wheel illustration courtesy
“Celebrate the Earth” by Laurie Cabot

oddesongs

Composer's Introduction

Goddessongs is a group of eight poems by the composer set to choral music. The text is a combination of folkloric derivations, mostly from Celtic traditions, but incorporating other traditions as well, including Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, and even Sumerian references. As the piece is a musical setting of seasonal celebrations on the wheel of the year, the choir may perform it as a whole or any one of the eight as part of that particular celebration. The composer has selected the "beginning" point as Yule, though many traditions hold Samhain as the official New Year. In truth, each sabat on the wheel marks a simultaneous ending and beginning so there is no right or wrong place to begin or end the piece. However, from a musical standpoint, Yule is preferred as it introduces a theme that reprises in Samhain, thus completing the circle.

Note also that each of the pieces contains a more rhythmic or dance section. This is a suggestion of the traditional circle dance that is an integral part of each celebration. (For example, the "Io Evohe" section in both Yule and Beltane.) The accompanying glossary gives pronunciations and brief explanations of the names, terms, and celebrations presented in the lyrics. It should help in the understanding of the text as well as in the interpretation of the music, which is somewhat flexible by design.

Gregory Amerind
Scottsdale, AZ
February 2004

Additional Performance notes:

- 1) There are two instances of extremely high soprano solo descants (Imbolc and Eostar). In the absence of an able soloist, feel free to substitute a flute or violin instead.
- 2) Although no specific percussion accompaniment yet exists, it may be added as desired as background or support of the dance sections at the directors' and performers' discretion.
- 3) Dynamics and tempi markings are not set in stone but meant as suggestive guidelines. If the director or performers find a groove that works better, go with it.

Goddess Songs

Glossary

Word or Words	Pronunciation	Meaning
Arianrhod	ah-ree-AHN-rohd	It is thought that Arianrhod, who's name may mean Silver (arian) Wheel (rhod), or perhaps huge or round wheel or circle in ancient Celtic dialect is a remembrance of a once powerful Goddess; a Goddess who was associated with the moon, the Milky Way, and was the goddess who wove peoples lives into the fabric of the afterlife, sending them either on to another realm or returning them for another life.
Awen	AH-wehn	Welsh derivation: The muse, the inspiration of the poets. More specifically from Celtic mythology - the power and knowledge from the Good-God Dagda, given as a breath through a dying Phantarch as a kiss to the one he, or in fact the Dagda has chosen as successor as Chief Bard of the Druids. The Awen is the breath of the Dagda which guides and instructs, and which sets a bard apart from other men.
Beltane	BEL-tayne	Literally "The fires of Bel" in honor of the ancient continental Celtic sun and healer God, Belenus, (or Bel). Also called May Eve, Beltane celebrates the traditional start of summer.
Blodeuwedd	BLOHD-eh-with	From Welsh blodau (flowers) + gwedd (appearance, form). Welsh goddess of fertility, innocence, enchantment and the dawn; Faery Queen "giver-of-life" heralding the arrival of Spring.
Brigid	BRIH-jihd	Brigid is the Celtic goddess of fire and inspiration (Poetry, smithcraft and healing) as well as yet another representation of the Fertility of Femininity and Love.
Dana	DAH-nah	(Celtic) The goddess from whom Tuatha Dé Danann (The People of Dana) were descended. She was the daughter of the god Dagda (the Good). She was another of the three war goddesses known collectively as the Morrigan.
Derry-doun-die-derry-dae	Dae-ree-doon-dee-dae-ree-dae	Used as a lilting underscore, mimicking ancient Celtic dialect in the madrigal tradition. It has no actual meaning.
Eostar	EH-ster	Festival of the Spring Equinox, taking its name from the Germanic goddess, Oстера (or Ostara). The Goddess blankets the Earth with fertility as the God stretches and grows to maturity. The hours of day and night are equal and light is overtaking darkness.
Goddess	GAHD-dess	In the context of folklore and mythology, the Goddess is not a theistic concept, but rather the representation of all that is, both spiritual and physical. More literally, the life force, symbolized as feminine that exists in all things, throughout all time and transcending all plains. She is the full circle - earth, air, fire, water, essence or body, mind, spirit, emotions, change. She is the creator and the destroyer and the muse that awakens creations of the human spirit.
Imbolc	Imm-OELK	Celebration in early February, also known as Bridfest (Breed-fest) celebrating the goddess Brid or Brigid. Literally – "in milk" in ancient Celtic. Refers specifically to milk from Sheep that was crucial to the survival in the cold of winter. Ewes traditionally give birth and begin lactating at this time of year. Its celebration is done with many candles and as usual much feasting, a festival of light, which celebrates fertility, and the promise of life returning soon in the coming spring.

Word or Words	Pronunciation	Meaning
Io Evohe	YOH Ev-OH-hay	A chant used to invoke mystical powers during rituals and celebrations. Its origins are cloudy. One account has the name Evohe as an ancient version of the Greek God Dionysus. In another it is thought to be based on ancient Hebraic letters Yod-He-Vau-He meaning "I am woman" or "I am life" symbolic of the Goddess as the source of all power. A Latin parallel to the same letters is E-V-E.
Liminality	Lihm-ihn-AL-ih-tee	A state of being in between the worlds of existence and non-existence, where there is no time or place. In Celtic tradition, this state possesses properties both mortal and immortal.
Litha	LIH-thah	Midsummer, Summer Solstice, festival held on the longest day of the year, celebrating the light's triumph over darkness and that of the bountiful beauty that light brings into life.
Lughnasadh	Loo-nah-SAH	August 1 - celebration of the first harvest. Much feasting and dancing occur, though it is a bit more somber than many of the other holidays. Tradition holds this as a time when the God (Lugh) begins to lose his strength as the Sun rises farther south each day and the nights grow longer. The Goddess watches in sorrow and joy as she realizes the God is dying yet lives on inside her as her child.
Mabon	Mah-BOHN	The autumn equinox celebrates the completion of the harvest begun at Lughnasadh. It is a time of great balance, sharing appreciation, and hope with despair and sorrow simultaneously as the Sun begins its decent towards its midwinter death and subsequent rebirth.
Merlin	MEHR-lihn	A mythical character with a composite historical background who supposedly possessed supernatural powers. If Merlin did exist, he was very likely a Welsh bard and soothsayer. The Welsh legends of Merlin characterize him more as a poet and musician, while the French legends emphasize his powers of magic. Some Celtic history suggests that Merlin received his training directly from the Priestess/Goddess Vivianne and is credited in some folklore as the architect of Stonehenge. Modern belief holds that the power and wisdom of Merlin stemmed not from the supernatural, but from long years of training as a druid. Druids were famed for their ability to create poetry spontaneously to suit any occasion, and for their superhuman memories. They served for centuries as the living repositories of the histories of the Celtic tribes.
Nammu/Ninmah/ Mami/Ay-ee-oh	NAH-Moo/NIHN-mah/MAH-mee/AY-ee-oh	Ancient Sumerian chants, used in some rituals for invocation and awakening the goddess from within.
Nemeton	NEHM-eh-tahn	Ancient Celtic word (probably derived from Greek roots) meaning "sacred grove". It can be used to describe a group of practitioners of the faith, or an actual gathering place for practicing ancient rites and rituals. In this work, Nemeton takes on a more broad meaning. The original word grove conjures an image of interconnecting trees and branches. The composer uses the word in this context to represent the interconnected-ness of all things.
Ostera (also Ostara or Eostre)	OH-stair-ah	Named for both the ancient Germanic (Saxon) Goddess of fertility and the period of the next full moon after the vernal equinox (a time of increased births and from whence we get the word estrogen, whose two symbols were the egg and the rabbit).
Samhain	SOW-ehn	Also known as Feast of the Dead, Feast of Apples, All Hallows, and of course Halloween, once marked the time of sacrifice. This was the time when animals were slaughtered to ensure food throughout the winter. The God fell as well to ensure our continuing existence. This is a time of reflection and coming to terms with the one thing in life over which we have no control - death. There are as many concepts attached to this holiday as any other, truly a time of remembrance of our ancestors and all those who have gone before

Word or Words	Pronunciation	Meaning
Tara	TAH-rah	The Great Goddess. Sculptural evidence discovered in prehistoric caves of 30,000 years ago finds her worship to be more ancient than humankind has memory. Legends and myths of every culture praise Tara. A parallel to the Celtic Goddess, Dana, she has been called by many names. Tara is a Sanskrit word meaning Star. We hear the echoes of her name in the Latin Terra, Mother Earth. The Druids called their mother goddess Tara. An ancient saga of Finland said to be 5 million years old speaks of Tar, the women of wisdom. An ancient tribe of indigenous peoples in the South American jungles calls to their goddess, Tarahumara. The Cheyenne people tell of a Star woman who fell from the heavens to the earth and that out of her body, all essential food grew. She sent her people to mate with the more primitive inhabitants of earth, thereby giving them the capacity for wisdom.
Vivianne	Vihv-ee-AHN	Vivianne is mentioned in various traditions as Faery Queen, High Priestess of Avalon, and Flower Goddess. According to some legends, she was created in the "otherworld" completely from flowers. As High Priestess, she trained Merlin and is the one who gives the sword Excalibur to Arthur. She is an important figure at Midsummer due to her status as the Flower Goddess.
Yule	Yool	Midwinter or Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, the turning point when the days shall afterwards grow longer as winter begins its passage into the coming spring. Darkness has triumphed and yet it simultaneously gives way to the rebirth of the light. In Celtic tradition, a Yule log is burned to symbolize the newborn Sun god.



Song of Midwinter

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Now the wheel has reached its ending,
In the instant of beginning,
Turning 'round in a spiral dance.
Night of the Yule.

Do not fear the longest night,
Darkness must give way to light,
All that dies is reborn tonight,
Cast a circle tight, give the spirit sight.

Io Evohe!

On this night all dies,
And all is reborn.
Cold, white death,
The ice and bones of winter;
Warm, black earth, so dark
Within the endless circle;
And the ruby blood that brings rebirth.

Io Evohe!

Io Evohe!

Now the wheel has reached its ending,
In the instant of beginning,
Turning 'round in a spiral dance.

Io Evohe!



Bridfest

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Deep in winter's darkness
Dwells the spark of Brigid's promise
Of the world reborn into her light.

Bitter winds blow silent and sharp
Upon our face,
But inside each heart and hearth
A fire burns
Melting morning frost from the window.
Each day the horned god gathers strength
To conquer the frigid night.

(Underscore)
Sing-a derry doun die derry dae

Dancing and turning
With longing and yearning,
We open the portal
Both magic and mortal,
Liminality reigns.

In between the worlds
Of place and time suspended,
Covered in the cold the Goddess has befriended,
Casting spells for winter gardens to be tended,
The progeny of Earth do not despair.
Hope lives within each breath of frozen air.
The milk of beasts begins to flow,
And seedlings suckle soil beneath the snow.

Cast your circle,
Light the fire,
Stoke the embers of desire.
Lust forsaken
Must awaken
To the musky scent of coming Spring.



(Spring Equinox)

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Nammu Nammu (continues as an underscore)

Ostera, bursting from darkness,
Fresh and true.
Ostera, O Goddess, we welcome you,
Make us new.
Mother of springtime,
Blodeuwedd.
Turn the wheel,
Burn fires and greet the dawn.
From now on the sun god grows
Ever strong.

Ostera, innocent maiden blossoming,
Opening Earth's energy
From the seed of Awen,
Darkness and light dancing in harmony.

We are the wind,
We are the rain, warm and swiftly silent.
We are the waves upon the ocean of change.
We are the Nemeton,
Sacred, ancient Nemeton,
Holy, magic Nemeton.

(Underscore chant)

Nammu Ninmah O Ma Mi O Nemeton Ay-ee-oh

We are all one,
No longer do we linger alone in the dark.
Many bodies with one mind and one heart sharing light.

We are the wind,
We are the rain, warm and swiftly silent.
We are the waves upon the ocean of change.
We are the Nemeton,
Sacred, ancient Nemeton,
Holy, magic Nemeton.

Blood of the Earth is flowing,
Strength of the Sun is growing,
As we renew the circle dance.

(Nammu Nammu underscore)

She changes everything she touches,
And everything she touches changes.



Beltane

May Song

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O Great Goddess Dana,
Mother to us all.
We light the fires of May,
Answer now your children's call.
The sun king rises
And we bathe in the warmth of his ruddy face,
Breathing deep the floral scent of summer.
We are wrapped in Bel's lusty embrace.
Your frozen heart, chilled by dark winter
Melts in the heat of his loving flame.
And in your womb new life will enter,
Quickened in the boiling cauldron of Beltane.

Io Evohe!
Io Evohe!

O Great God of May
Bring pleasure to your queen.
Her joy and passion turn to bliss
And turn brown earth to green.
Infuse her with the power
She reclaims this day
To share with all her children,
Who dance and sing and play.

Io Evohe!
Io Evohe!

Celebrate the circle,
Celebrate rebirth.
Celebrate the great reunion
Of the sky and Earth.

Celebrate the Earth!



Song of Midsummer

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Let us delight, the solstice comes
Long be the days kissed by the sun.
Fused with the fire of Dragons.
Oh, Goddess Vivianne, bless us.
Your sword of light protects us all.
Goddess, Goddess Vivianne!
Merlin's mentor.
Ring of silver, dragon's myst, standing stone.
Ancient blade of mystic power
Ignite our passion!

Voices cry, fires burn,
Bodies writhe, yearning for pleasure.
Lusty games, sacred light,
Liquid flames, naked in rapture
Lovers drink from pools of ecstasy,
Quenching their desire.

Spiral dancers spinning wildly in a trance,
Melt into each other.
Summer wind blows the end of the sun king's waxing.
Arianrhod turns her wheel of silver.

Lovers embraced in warm respite,
Lingering in the afterglow,
Promise their hearts forever
Under a majick summer spell.

Come all and cast the circle never ending, never beginning.
God of the sun, we honor you on your day of greatest power
And light the flame of Litha.
All dance around the flame, we celebrate the power in everyone.
Dance of the Goddess, we delight in your bountiful measure
Burning and turning in eternal pleasure.
Blessed be.
Blessed we dance in the glow of moonlight
A never-ending circle.
Rise up!

Through the night spirits fly into light,
Keep the fires blazing.
Lovers throng, carry on
Summer's song until the dawn is breaking.
And the sun begins its journey back,
Back to the source, circle open,
The dance is done.

ughnasadh

Song of First Harvest

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Sun of the Lughnasadh,
Glowing in goldenrod,
Light our world, green land of Tara!
Bring our seeds to grain
As your power slowly wanes,
Fruits of earth's bounty sustains;
Lughnasadh.

Water, fire, earth and air,
Yield to us this harvest fair.
Faeries frolic with no care
'Neath the Barley Moon arising,
We bid farewell to the dying Sun.

Sun God of Lughnasadh,
Glowing in goldenrod,
Lighting our green world,
Bringing our seeds to grain
As your power slowly wanes.
Dying, you begin your journey
Back to the beginning.
Blessed be, blessed be your bounty.

Dance in a circle unbroken
Chanting words so long unspoken
Reclaim the earth for the Goddess Dana!
And for the sun god, Lughnasadh!

Mabon

Autumn Equinox

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Nammu, Nammu O
Nammu, Nammu O
Nammu, Nammu O
Nammu, Nammu O
(Chorus continues this chant under duet)

All the seeds of spring
Have become Autumn's grain.
In this perfect moment
Joy and sorrow join
In sunlight and shadow.

Mabon, bountiful, bittersweet,
Terra dances into Winter.
With this celebration
We show appreciation
For all of your gifts
From the harvest, from the Goddess.

(chorus chants: Nammu O, Ae Ee O, Ninmah O, Mami O, Mabon)
Blessed be
Blood of the Goddess.
Let us drink from the cup of her season,
Taste the colours of balance and reason.
Ride the rainbow,
Winds of change blow,
Darkness and Light now together flow.

Blessed Be!

 **amhain**

New Year

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Dying.
All is Dying.
All but our faith in the promise
Of the circle caste,
Spinning future into past.

Winter steals the sunlight.
Its cold, piercing sword
Cannot wound our spirit,
Tho' the nights grow long
There is hope within our song.

Death is not an ending.
Life must repose
Before it can return.
The embers of the Goddess ever burn.

Now the wheel has reached its ending
In the instant of beginning,
All are joined in the spiral dance,
All are set free.

Mystical, enchanted night,
Darkness overcomes the light.
As we dress in November white,
We prepare the feast of Tara.

Blessed be, eternal Goddess of the Earth
Ever turning.