



# THE PIPES OF CHRISTMAS

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PRODUCTION

*Proudly presented by The Learned Kindred of Currie*

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PRODUCTION

# THE PIPES OF CHRISTMAS

SATURDAY

**December 16, 2023**

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church,  
New York City

SUNDAY

**December 17, 2023**

Central Presbyterian Church,  
Summit, New Jersey

W E B C A S T

**December 22-31, 2023**

Global Concert Highlights

Whether you're joining us live in person, or enjoying the concert highlights webcast from around the world, we're excited to celebrate the season with you.

The Pipes of Christmas brings together musicians, soloists, and performers from across America and the UK for a stirring celebration of the Christmas season and the Celtic spirit.

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As our primary fundraiser, the Pipes of Christmas ensures that we can continue our efforts to support the global Scottish community through initiatives. Your gifts are always welcomed.

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*The 2023 edition of the Pipes of Christmas is lovingly dedicated to the memory*

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Bob Hageman

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Shane MacGowan  
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Sinéad O'Connor  
Brian O'Donovan  
Al Petteway  
Marjorie Walker



# WELCOME TO PIPES 2023

Where were you twenty-five years ago? Some of you might have been knee deep in academic textbooks while others were maybe living elsewhere (at that time, I was living in London). I know some of you were yet to be born and I'm willing to bet that quite a few of you had a lush head of hair (I am gradually joining that camp too, though I prefer to think of it as my hair follicles practicing social distancing!). Maybe a handful of you were fortunate enough to witness the inaugural Pipes of Christmas Concert.

My personal journey with the Pipes of Christmas began about 16 years ago following a serendipitous encounter on NJ Transit. Returning home from my Broadway show, *Jersey Boys*, I found myself in conversation with a fellow musician wielding a violin case. I discovered he was extremely well versed in Scottish traditional music - for a Scotsman looking for a Celtic connection here in the US, this was like finding the sun in the Scottish Highland sky. This musician was none other than fiddler extraordinaire Paul Woodiel, and as fate would have it, we happened to live in the same town.

One day he mentioned a Celtic Christmas show he was involved with and suggested I might like to join. Now, given my past experiences growing up in the Highlands playing in what I deemed rather 'cheesy' Scottish productions, I wasn't sure about this, but Paul assured me of the concert's authenticity and said, "You must meet Bob Currie".

Well, I met Bob, who's passion for this project won me over, and he hired me to play my first Pipes concert. I have been a part of this amazing musical family ever since - my 13-year-old daughter, Mackenzie, has literally grown up as a member of this extended family. The integrity and quality of this production have left a lasting impression on me, and it is a favourite on my concert schedule.

A few years ago, I found myself inheriting the musical director's baton from the esteemed Jeff Rickard. Filling his shoes was no easy feat but hopefully I have been able to maintain the high standard he set.

Over the years, I've been privileged to compose and arrange many pieces for this remarkable ensemble of musicians. This year, in addition to arranging music by Vangelis and a lively new tune by Eyler Coates, I have written a new song using lyrics from the *Carmina Gadelica* (pub.1900) and based on a story from the

Hebrides which Bob had found. FISHERMAN'S BLESSING will be sung in Gaelic by Cynthian Knight.

Several years ago, I recorded an album of Celtic music intended for use in TV and film for a production library company. As usual I composed more music than I needed for that project, so some ideas were filed away in the recesses of my mind. One of those unused ideas was a short bagpipe melody which I always felt had some potential. With the Pipes 25th anniversary approaching, the idea of composing a piece for the entire ensemble to commemorate the occasion started to take shape. The more I thought about it, I remembered my old bagpipe tune and realized it was a perfect fit.

My new composition, FICHEAD 'S A CÒIG [pronounced FICH (as in 'Loch')-ID-SA-COE-IK and is Scots Gaelic for '25'] unfolds in three distinct sections played continuously.

I. AIR - A gentle introduction is established by the piano and strings with the cello playing a variation of my old pipe theme.

II. REELS - These reels take on a contemporary feel incorporating unconventional time signatures. For those attempting to count along, the first reel features three measures of 7/4 followed by one measure of 4/4 ( $7 + 7 + 7 + 4 = 25$ ) - see what I did there? As the reel progresses, various interpretations of the main theme intertwine. The second reel introduces yet another variation of the original theme as a kind of fugue, eventually leading to the grand finale.

III. MARCH - It is in this section that my original bagpipe theme, having provided much of the melodic and harmonic material for the preceding sections, is finally played in its entirety with the full ensemble coming together for a triumphant conclusion.

Blending traditional elements with a modern twist, my hope is that this new composition captures the essence of "The Pipes of Christmas".

So, welcome to the 25th Annual Pipes of Christmas Concert filled with an eclectic mix of new material and familiar favourites. Whether you are a returning attendee or experiencing us for the first time, we are glad to have the pleasure of your company and invite you to sit back, relax and enjoy enchanting readings and beautiful music. Here's to another fichead 's a còig - may the pipes play on for another 25 years, and may your hair remain where it belongs!

Slàinte Mhath,  
Steve Gibb

*Wishing you  
a joyful  
holiday season.*



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## JOHN MACMILLAN HONORARY CHAIR

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2023 Pipes of Christmas as your Honorary Chair. What better way to start the Christmas season than joining together with a global community through music to celebrate our shared culture and connections?

I am honored to be involved in this year's celebrations to commemorate the life, sporting and community service achievements of Eric Liddell. As we approach the centenary of his historic success at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, I am proud to be working on an initiative to secure and celebrate the legacy of Eric Liddell for future generations across the world.

When visiting schools to talk about the work of our local charity, The Eric Liddell Community, I was shocked to face the recurring question of "Eric who"? Of course, many know Eric from the 1981 Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*, but we now have generations of young people who have never seen the film and do not know his inspiring story. Joined by partners including Scottish Rugby, Scottish Athletics and the University of Edinburgh, we embarked on The Eric Liddell 100.

The Eric Liddell 100 is a programme of events and activities based on three workstreams: education, culture and sports & physical activity. We are working with partners in Scotland, UK, China/ Hong Kong and USA, aiming to make a positive difference, while also ensuring that society does not forget one of Scotland and the world's iconic figures.

We know that this initiative won't change the world, but we hope to deliver some much-needed light linked to the significant challenges we face in today's society - Eric's legacy will help to do this.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John MacMillan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John MacMillan**

Chief Executive, The Eric Liddell Community



# SUE CATON

As the niece of Eric Liddell, I am delighted to see the work that is underway to celebrate his life and achievements. I am a Patron and supporter of the work of The Eric Liddell Community which, like my uncle, provides support and comfort to those that need it in their local community. I, along with Eric's daughters, are excited to be involved in the plans to mark his centenary and to support the developments that will ensure that his legacy lives on for many years to come. From my home in Edinburgh, Scotland, I hope that you enjoy your evening of Celtic music and entertainment and wish you well for 2024.



Care. Compassion. Community.

# THE ERIC LIDDELL 100

## **A legend. A legacy. A lifetime of inspiration.**

The Eric Liddell 100 (EL100) is a programme of events and activities to recognise and celebrate the life, sporting and community service achievements of Eric Liddell. It is being planned around 2024, the centenary of his historic success at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Watch this short film which tells you more about The EL100.

The EL100 is led by The Eric Liddell Community, a registered care and specialist dementia charity based in Edinburgh, close to where Eric lived and taught during his time in Scotland. The organisation was established in 1980, and their work is inspired by Eric's values to deliver positive change in their community.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal is the Patron of The Eric Liddell 100.

### The Eric Liddell 100 Aims

- To celebrate Eric Liddell globally, for his exceptional life, values and achievements
- To acknowledge how his outlook shapes how we help people live full lives
- To show a new generation how these aims can help them live their best lives
- To build on existing international links, and strengthen relationships around the world
- To develop new sporting, business, cultural and educational relationships linked to Eric Liddell's legacy.

These ambitious aims are being delivered in partnership with a wide range of individuals and organisations in Scotland, the UK, Hong Kong, China and the USA. Plans are being developed through three workstreams:

- Educational - Development of physical and online resources to support learning in schools, universities and adult learning globally.
- Sporting/Physical Activity - Promoting the legacy of Eric Liddell's sporting success through participation, engagement, fun and competition across multiple disciplines.
- Cultural - The creation of an Eric Liddell Exhibition and other cultural celebrations in keeping with his legacy. There are opportunities for the Exhibition to tour mainland China and Hong Kong.

## Get Involved

There are many ways that you can support The Eric Liddell 100, including:

- Raising awareness and promoting the programme - one of our key aims is to raise awareness of Eric Liddell and his achievements and values. If you can help by sharing information through your networks, media connections and social media platforms, this would be greatly appreciated.
- Making connections - by introducing us to prospective partners, supporters or funders who would be interested in the Eric Liddell 100.
- Funding/ sponsorship – could you or your organisation help to fund our plans? From sponsoring the exhibition, resources for schools, a special screening of Chariots of Fire, or the EL100 rugby kit, there are many ways that your donations could help us to celebrate and secure Eric Liddell's legacy.

For further information visit <https://ericliddell.org/the-eric-liddell-100>

Contact: [el100@ericliddell.org](mailto:el100@ericliddell.org)

Or follow us on social media:



[The Eric Liddell 100](#)



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# Scottish Heritage USA, Inc.

Founded 1965

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and enrichment of Scottish traditions, history and culture and fostering strong ties with the people and places of Scotland

## Membership Benefits

- Enable support for scholarships in piping, drumming and Highland dancing
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- Include subscription to "SCOTLAND" magazine (6 x Year)
- Include subscription to the National Trust for Scotland magazine (3 x year)
- Include the Scottish Heritage USA e-Newsletter (10 x year)
- Grant you FREE admission\* to all (over 70) National Trust for Scotland properties
- Include reciprocal membership to the National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA

\* Also FREE admission to National Trust sites in England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

\*\* AND Free admission to sites owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, USA



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# THE COMPANY

## OUR NARRATOR

Susan Porterfield Currie

## OUR READERS

James Robinson & Andrew Weir

## OUR MUSICIANS

Rachel Clemente – harp

Steve Gibb – guitar

Sarah Hewitt-Roth - cello

Dan Houghton – pipes and whistle

Cynthia Knight – vocalist

William Peek – organ

Chris Ranney – piano and harmonium

Mark Verdino – bass

Caitlin Warbelow – fiddle

Paul Woodiel - fiddle

&

The Solid Brass Ensemble –

*Doug Haislip, director*

The Kevin Ray Blandford Memorial

Pipe Band – *Martha Hall, Pipe Major*

## MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Steve Gibb

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Robert Currie

## MUSICAL DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Jeff Rickard

## STAGE MANAGER

Pam McCaddin

## HOUSE MANAGERS

Matt Sinclair

Maureen Sinclair

John Worley

# MARKETING TEAM

## GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGNER

Melana Currie

## SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST

Andrea Lewis

## BRAND & MARKETING STRATEGIST

Kristen VanderHoek

..... ACT ONE .....

Prologue

*Performed in memory of  
our departed company members.*

I Horò 's Na Hug Òro Eile

Highland Cathedral

Joy to the World

Wexford Carol

Angels We Have Heard On High

Beannachd an Iasgair (The Fisherman's Blessing)  
*World Premiere*

Eric's Theme

Pipe Band Medley

St. Columba

Amazing Grace

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission. Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices. The taking of photographs, videos and the use of recording equipment is forbidden.

..... ACT TWO .....

Ceann-bliadhna Sona (Happy Anniversary) – *World Premiere*

Fichead's a Coig (Twenty-Five Years) – *World Premiere*

In the Bleak Midwinter

Traditional Celtic set

Oidhche Shamhach (Silent Night)

O Come All Ye Faithful

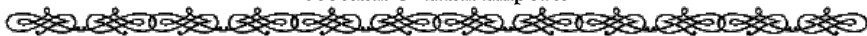
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The Lord Lyon Society is a Scottish charity established by the Lord Lyon King of Arms, Dr Joe Morrow, CVO. The Lord Lyon King of Arms is the head of the Court of the Lord Lyon, Scotland's heraldic authority, responsible for granting and regulating the use of coats of arms in Scotland. The Court of the Lord Lyon is custodian of the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland which was established by an Act of the Scottish Parliament in the year 1672, has been maintained and added by the Court of the Lord Lyon ever since right up to the present day and now runs to some 100 Volumes which are in daily use.

To find out more about the Society please go to <https://lordlyonsociety.org.uk>  
To become a member of the Society please go to <https://lordlyonsociety.org.uk/join/>  
To find out more about the Court please go to <https://courtofthelordlyon.scot>

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# 2023 INSPIRE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Presented by The Learned Kindred of Currie

The “Inspire Award” was established to recognize individuals who display significant gifts and energy to further the aims of the Learned Kindred of Currie and their cultural arts mission. This year is no exception.

We are delighted to bestow this year’s Inspire Award upon two gentlemen to whom this concert owes a great debt. In fact, without their creative genius, there would not be a Pipes of Christmas concert at all.

## Pipe Major Kevin Ray Blandford (1963-2023)

Kevin Blandford’s love affair with the bagpipe began in his early teens. It was his enthusiasm for Celtic music which turned a young man with a raw talent into one of America’s most prominent and accomplished performers and composers.



The original RP Blandford & Son Pipe Band, formed by him in 1986, was named after the family business based in Redlands, California.

He performed at the Learned Kindred of Currie's Kirking of the Tartan services from 1995-1998, won a number of West Coast championship titles and an impressive 2nd place in the 2000 Pipe Band World Championship in Glasgow, Scotland.

It was his outstanding work as a performer and arranger, recognized by Robert Currie, which provided the foundation for the Pipes of Christmas.

### **Brilliant composer for the bagpipes**

During their tenure working together, Blandford and Currie created several compositions including a lament on the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. The tribute to Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on her passing in 2002 at age 101 was more celebratory in tone, commemorating a life well-lived. But his best-remembered Pipes of Christmas composition came as he watched the terrible events of September 11, 2001, unfold in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington. It was one of the darkest days in American history. His tune Lament for the Lost debuted in that year's Pipes of Christmas concert and was performed again in 2011, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Jeff Rickard, long-serving Pipes of Christmas Musical Director often worked closely with Kevin. They collaborated, for example, on *Amazing Grace: A Collection of Hymns for Bagpipe and Organ* (1986) and the original CD, *The Pipes of Christmas* (1987). It was this CD, acquired by Currie in the 1990's, which inspired the transformation of this brilliant music into a live concert experience.

### **“When it came to the pipes, Blandford was a painstaking professional!”**

While Kevin forged his musical reputation as an outstanding musician and composer, he was also a talented choral singer, teacher, an open sea diver and dive instructor.

Following his untimely death in 2003, the San Bernardino County Sun wrote movingly about the influence he had on the lives of others. “If we must put a name on it, a gentle passion might fit. For music, for the ocean and for seeing the worth in other people.”



## Music Director Emeritus, Jeffrey Rickard

Like his good friend Kevin Blandford, Jeff stepped out on the musical trail at a young age. He describes himself as a “cradle Episcopalian” so it comes as no surprise that he was organist for Ascension Parish Day School at the tender age of 12.

### **“I was born playing Bach on a keyboard.”**

Church music, Bach in particular, was his passion and piano and organ lessons came early in life. The bagpipe, thanks to Kevin Blandford, came later. Lavish in the praise for his friend, Jeff said Blandford “taught me how to immerse myself in the music of the bagpipe.”

Now the respected Musical Director Emeritus for the Pipes of Christmas, he was, as they say, in at the beginning. As an organist he worked with Kevin Ray Blandford on the original Pipes of Christmas CD, the music which inspired Currie to establish the event enjoyed today.

Jeff led our concert through our first 20 years and then passed the baton over to our current music director, Steve Gibb.

Jeff brought a wealth of musical experience and community involvement to the Pipes of Christmas, which was one of his many roles while he was Director of Choral Activities to the University of Redlands. His choral program – in particular the annual Christmas presentation of the Feast of Lights – gained an international reputation and was in essence a juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary choral works and innovative arrangements.

This talented musician is currently Kapellmeister at Trinity Episcopal Church, Community Chorus of Redlands – St Dunstan's Choir. He also works with the wider Redlands community as musical director for a range of summer musical theatre productions.

*The Learned Kindred of Currie is proud to recognize these two incredibly gifted musicians and artists.*





## THE ROYAL CELTIC SOCIETY

[www.royalcelticsociety.scot](http://www.royalcelticsociety.scot)

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**Based in the heart of Edinburgh's New Town, the Royal Celtic Society was founded on 4 January 1820 by Sir Walter Scott and a group of Highland gentlemen, at a meeting just a stone's throw from our base today.**

Ever since, the society has been active in support of Scotland's artistic and cultural heritage in its broadest sense.

- Funding the publication of key texts, whether literary, musical or historic
- Providing financial support for research
- Sponsoring key cultural events, including the Edinburgh International Harp Festival, the Northern Meeting Piping Competition, local Highland Games, musical and theater productions
- Advising government and keynote organizations on heritage related questions

Although members are largely based in Scotland, the society has a large and growing membership base in the United States, whose support we value very much.

Members receive, inter alia:

- A full colour, quarterly members' e-newsletter, packed with information and opinion
- Regular social activities, in Edinburgh and elsewhere
- A monthly (during university term time) lecture series, also broadcast via Zoom
- And much more

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If you would like to know more about membership of the Royal Celtic Society, please contact the Secretary Dr Alastair Gordon via email at: [info@royalcelticsociety.scot](mailto:info@royalcelticsociety.scot).  
He will be delighted to hear from you!



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Mr. & Mrs Henry Lafayette Collins, III.  
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occassion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Celebration  
of The Pipes of Christmas,  
of which she was a longtime patron.

# **Congratulations to the Pipes of Christmas**



**We hope to see you  
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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Learned Kindred of Currie



## A TRADITION OF NEW MUSIC

Over the past 25 years, the Pipes of Christmas has provided a showcase for young, aspiring composers. Here are some of the many original compositions our audiences have enjoyed through the years:

Lament for the Lost  
The John Muir Suite  
The Mystical Nativity  
The Old Bard of Stilligarry  
Balmoral Snow  
The Lad from Kingussie

Lullaby for a Prince  
Ascension  
The Golden Hearth  
Carolina Christmas  
Sea of Tranquility  
Christmas Card from Ettrick Bay



# ..... SILENT NIGHT .....

Silent night, holy night!

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!

Shepherds quake at the sight

Glories stream from heaven afar

Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!

Christ the Savior is born

Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night!

Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from Thy holy face

With the dawn of redeeming grace

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Jesus Lord, at Thy birth