

SIMPLE GIFTS

Three women playing twelve instruments
perform Romanian, Klezmer, Greek, Irish, Scottish, Appalachian, and more



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ABOUT SIMPLE GIFTS



Three women plus twelve instruments equals one good time when Simple Gifts takes the stage. Drawing on an impressive variety of ethnic folk styles, this award-winning trio plays everything from lively Irish jigs and down-home American reels to hard-driving Klezmer frailachs and haunting Gypsy melodies, spicing the mix with the distinctive rhythms of Balkan dance music, the lush sounds of Scandinavian twin fiddling, and original compositions written in a traditional style.

Combining tradition with innovation, Simple Gifts creates some of the finest arrangements in folk music today: swing fiddle creeps into a Romanian dance, spoons show up in an Irish reel, and the concertina ventures far beyond styles considered traditional for that instrument. Based in the hills of central Pennsylvania, these women play an amazing array of instruments. Linda Littleton, Rachel Hall, and Karen Hirshon switch with ease among two violins, concertina, mandolin, banjolin, recorders, bowed psaltery, hammered dulcimer, baritone fiddle, guitar, piano, and percussion.

Simple Gifts is frequently complimented on their stage presence, which is warm, personal, and accented with humor. These women deliver their music with rare intensity and contagious enthusiasm. It's obvious that Simple Gifts loves the music they play and knows how to share their excitement with the audience. This is an act not to be missed!

SIMPLE GIFTS – WHERE THEY’VE PLAYED

Arts Centers & Concert Series

Smithsonian, Washington DC
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn NY
Whitaker Center, Harrisburg PA
National Theatre, Washington DC
Lincoln Theatre, Marion VA
Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square PA
Hershey Theatre, Hershey PA
Strong Museum, Rochester NY
Smoot Theatre, Parkersburg WV
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Phila PA
Williams Center, Easton PA
Hoover Auditorium, Lakeside OH
Court Square Theatre, Harrisonburg VA
Ashe County Arts Center, Jefferson NC
171 Cedar Arts Center, Corning NY
Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton NJ
Riviera Theatre, North Tonawanda NY
Troy–Hayner Cultural Center, Troy OH
Randolph County Arts Center, Elkins WV
Momentum Ctr for the Arts, Clarksburg WV
McCoy Theatre, Moorefield WV
Tug Valley Arts Ctr, Williamson WV
Burgin Center for the Arts, Mercersburg PA
Quick Center, St. Bonaventure NY
Abbey Theatre, Dublin OH
Acoustic Brew Concerts, State College PA
Music at Penn Alps, Grantsville MD
Strand Theatre, Zelienople PA
Reitz Theatre, DuBois PA
Godfrey Daniels, Bethlehem PA
Grant County Arts Council, Petersburg WV

Festivals

Old Songs Festival, Altamont NY
Philadelphia Folk Festival, Schwenksville PA
Cincinnati Celtic World Festival
Shenandoah Valley, Orkney Springs VA
Allegheny Multicultural Fest, Cumberland MD
Central PA Fest of the Arts, State College PA
Midifest International, Middletown OH
Bethlehem Musikfest, Bethlehem PA
First Night (8 different locations)
Columbia Lakefront Festival, Columbia MD
Spirit of Rockville, Rockville MD
Fine Arts Fiesta, Wilkes–Barre PA
Hoodlebug Festival, Homer City PA
Mayfair Festival of the Arts, Allentown PA
Johnstown FolkFest, Johnstown PA
Shinglehouse Music Festival, Shinglehouse PA
Cook Forest Folk Gathering, Cook Forest PA
Greenwood Furnace Folk, Huntingdon PA
Folk College, Huntingdon PA
Westmoreland Arts/Heritage Fest, Greensburg PA

Colleges & Universities

Penn State, Columbia, Georgetown, Gettysburg,
Drew, Clarion, Alfred, Salem, Westchester,
Bloomsburg, Mount Union, Juniata, Potomac,
Frostburg, Medaille, Elmira, Swarthmore,
Villanova, Defiance, Lafayette, Centenary,
Mansfield, Cheyney, West Point, Bergen, Sussex,
Butler, Onondaga, Seton Hill, Walsh, Ohio State
Lima, Fredonia, Western Maryland, Hagerstown,
Centenary, Marywood

Simple Gifts has opened for Mark O’Connor, Natalie MacMaster, Tom Paxton, John McCutcheon, Jay Ungar & Molly Mason, Cherish the Ladies, Barachois, Kevin Burke, Mamadou Diabate, Robin & Linda Williams, Alash Tuvan Throat Singers, and Boys of the Lough.

SIMPLE GIFTS – WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Simple Gifts wowed the audience with a cultural and educational program that was fun, informative, and educational. —*Teresia Bush, Smithsonian Institute*

What sets Simple Gifts apart is not just their choice of ethnic music, but how they put it together...in an almost miraculous, balanced musical exuberance. Their combination of sheer fun, audience interaction and flawless technique led those attending to make comments like “this is one of the most amazing things I’ve ever heard.”
—*Derek Davis, Sullivan County Arts Council*

Simple Gifts presented one of the finest concerts I have ever experienced at our church, and I've been Music Director here for more than 25 years. They are so accomplished on so many diverse instruments, making it seem effortless.

—*Dr. James Hicks, Morristown Presbyterian Church*

The members of Simple Gifts are proof that the best groups are more than the sum of their individual talents. These women share a chemistry that infuses their music with energy, integrity, and joy. Theirs is a special gift.

—*Dave Johnson, Boston Globe*

I was concert manager at Long Island Traditional Music Association for many years and one of my favorite evenings was a Simple Gifts concert. It was like an evening spent with dear friends (incredibly talented friends!) and has remained one of my dearest memories of my time there. —*Gerry Riemer, Long Island Traditional Music Association*

Few musicians can match Simple Gifts' warmly personal stage presence. Their performances are noted for the infectious enthusiasm and sprinkling of good humor that come through.

—*Jennifer O'Callaghan, Celtic Classic Festival*

It felt like they played this program just for this audience; so full of spontaneity and enthusiasm. Our audience is used to classical music, but with Simple Gifts' authentic style, spontaneity and enthusiasm, there were no boundaries. Their performance is truly suitable for audiences of all backgrounds. Their artistry is impeccable and they radiate the sheer joy of playing together. It was a well-deserved standing ovation!

—*Ludwig Brunner, Quick Center for the Arts*

No other performer has topped Simple Gifts on the fun meter.

—*Carol Aulenbach, Reading Public Museum*

These musicians are one heck of a team. Gifted, yes, but not simple. I have heard nothing but raves and I believe they may have changed the direction of several young lives. This is not something an old teacher and principal says lightly.

—*Nancy Powell, Lost River Educational Foundation*

They are simply extraordinary!

—*Donn Murphy, National Theatre*

SIMPLE GIFTS WORKSHOPS

Simple Gifts loves to share music, whether they are at a weekend festival, a school assembly, an informal jam, or a university master class. Workshops can range from half an hour to a full weekend.

"I've rarely seen instructors—of music or much else—who are as together, personable, friendly, and generous with their knowledge. And it's all supported by formidable talent and knowledge of several musical genres." Marguerite Plank, –Gettysburg Workshops

Meet the Instruments

This presentation gives an overview of the instruments – where they're from, how they work, and how they fit into the culture they're from. Depending on the size of the group, there will be an opportunity to try several instruments.

School Programs

Educational assembly programs are available for any grade level from preschool through high school and include age-appropriate discussions about the instruments, musical styles, and diverse cultures represented. These programs are educational, multicultural, interactive, and fun!

Learn to Play Spoons!

In their most frequently requested workshop, Simple Gifts teaches participants of all ages to play spoons, and then invites them to perform during a Simple Gifts concert!

The Folk Process

In this lecture/demonstrate, the musicians demonstrate and explain the wide variety of instruments and styles they play. They also discuss the process they use to transform a simple folk melody into an interesting performance piece. Questions and audience discussion are encouraged.



Instant Musician!

Simple Gifts provides ukuleles and/or bowed psalteries, and in 30–45 minutes, participants know the basics and can play a simple tune!

Playing in a Band

Intended for musicians of all instruments and levels, this workshop addresses issues of arranging and performing folk music. The attendees form a band and together arrange a piece of music to be performed with Simple Gifts during a public concert that follows.

Let's Jam!

There's nothing like a jam session for the sheer joy of sharing music! Generally held after a concert, community members bring instruments to join the fun. Non-musicians are encouraged to sing, play percussion instruments provided by Simple Gifts, or just revel in the excitement of musicians connecting through music.

There are many more possibilities.

Simple Gifts loves the challenge of creating new workshops, so if you have something in mind that you don't see here, please ask.