

A' Soalin'

The song “A' Soalin'” was composed by Paul Stookey of the rock group *Peter, Paul and Mary*, This version was arranged by Daniel Canosa. “A' Soalin'” is derived from the ancient folk tune “Hey ho, nobody home,” with some additional elements. The act of “soalin'” has historical roots in England. The word “soalin'” has a dual meaning which is described below.

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Lyrics

Hey ho, nobody home, meat nor drink nor money have I none
Yet shall we be merry, hey ho, nobody home.

Hey ho, nobody home, meat nor drink nor money have I none
Yet shall we be merry, hey ho, nobody home.

Hey ho, nobody home.

Chorus:

Soul, a soul, a soul cake, please good missus a soul cake.

An apple, a pear, a plum, a cherry,

any good thing to make us all merry,

One for [Peter](#), two for [Paul](#), three for Him who made us all.

God bless the master of this house, and the mistress also
And all the little children that round your table grow.

The cattle in your stable and the dog by your front door

And all that dwell within your gates

we wish you ten times more.

Chorus (1x)

Go down into the [cellar](#) and see what you can find

If the [barrels](#) are not empty we hope you will be kind.

We hope you will be kind with your apple and strawber'
For we'll come no more a 'soulin' till this time next year.

Chorus (1x)

The streets are very dirty, my shoes are very thin.
I have a little pocket to put a penny in.
If you haven't got a penny, a [halve penny](#) will do.
If you haven't got a halve penny then [God bless you](#).

Chorus (1x)

Now to the Lord sing praises all you within this place,
And with true love and [brotherhood](#) each other now embrace.
This holy tide of [Christmas](#) of beauty and of grace,
Oh [tidings](#) of comfort and joy.

I. A' Soalin'

A' Soalin' is a traditional folk song. It refers to [All Souls' Day](#) in [England](#) where the poor begged households for [soul cakes](#), flat cakes marked with crosses and in return, they promised to pray for the households' families and passed loved ones. This version contains lyrics [samples](#) of [Hey Ho, Nobody Home](#) and [God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen](#).

As we see from the lyrics, the children asked for "any good thing to make *us* merry" but *soulcakes* were not originally intended for the living. Long before the Christian church gave the end of October and beginning of November the name "All Hallows", it was the Celtic new year. It is thought that the *soulcake* tradition may be a remnant of the ancient, pre-Christian practice of preparing a final meal for that year's dead.

The Celts believed in ghosts and they considered it quite natural for a departed spirit to want to hang around its old haunts (sorry). Equally naturally, they didn't want to keep bumping into spectres of their revered ancestors every time they popped down the mead-hall for a quick one. Thus, on the last night of the year (the Celtic year, that is; our Halloween) the table would be set and the spirits of those relatives who had died that year were invited back one last time. After that they were expected to go and stay gone.

There is something about the tune which is very eerie. Perhaps it's something to do with its primitive simplicity as it uses only four notes: g, a, b and C.

The custom of *wassailing* (or *wasseling*) is similar in some ways to the *soulcake* tradition - you knocked on your neighbors' doors, sang a special song and received gifts. In this case the singers were usually adults and the gifts were a little more grown-up: mostly beer. *Wassailers* were thought to be luck-bringers and they sometimes carried an elder bough bedecked with ribbons to

signify good fortune. Another curious feature of this custom was the "peg", a large wooden bowl (often adorned with holly and ivy) which was used to collect the beer. This "peg o' wassail" gave rise to the quaint yet baffling English pub name "The Pig and Whistle".

The word *wassail* literally means "be healthy". It comes from two Old English words *waes* and *hail*. The first, *waes*, means "be" (the imperative form of *wesan*, "to be"), and *hail* is the same as our modern word *hale*, "healthy" or "whole".

Unlike the *souling* tradition there are many *wassailing* songs, the most well-known of which is called "Here We Come A-Wassailing". The tune for this song is known in various forms right across Europe from Ireland to the Balkans and is usually associated with midwinter.

"Hey Ho Nobody Home" goes back to Elizabethan times, and was originally a five part round, each part one bar long. The first four bars were essentially as you know them from the first two parts of the three part round. The fifth bar has the words "Yet will I be merry", sung with four eighth notes and two quarter notes.

Paul Stookey (of Peter, Paul and Mary) actually describes how he came up with what was recorded - he was working finger exercises trying to bring in an old wassailing tune (Hey ho) mixed with the (as we learn elsewhere) separate souling tradition from the end of the Celtic year (definitely related to the later Halloween). They only added the piece from God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman when they were practicing for the recording - so the piece at the end has nothing to do with the middle and reveals nothing about the origin of the title.

It seems we have soul sandwi(t)ch, with the end of the Celtic year a soalin' (PPM intentional misspelling) as the meat and end of the year Christian/Wasseling tradition as the bread.

Souling.—On the 2nd of November, All Souls' Day, it is in Shropshire the custom for the village children to go round to all their neighbours *souling*, as they call it, collecting small contributions, and singing the following verses, which I took down from two of the children themselves: —

Soul! soul! for a soul-cake;
Pray, good mistress, for a soul-cake.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Them who made us all.

Soul! soul! for an apple or two;
If you've got no apples, pears will do.
Up with your kettle, and down with your pan;

Give me a good big one, and I'll be gone.
Soul! soul! for a soul-cake;
Pray, good mistress, a soul-cake, &c.

An apple or pear, a plum or a cherry,
Is a very good thing to make us merry.
Soul! soul! &c.

The soul-cake referred to in the verses is a sort of bun, which until lately it was an almost general custom for persons to make, and to give to one another on the 2nd of November. Perhaps some of your readers can state whether this custom prevails in other counties in England. It seems to be a remnant of the practice of collecting alms, to be applied to the benefit of the souls of the departed, for which especial masses and services were formerly sung on All Souls' Day.

II. The “Souling” or “Wassailing” Tradition

Here's a very early mention of "Souling"—from a [commentary on Shakespeare](#) from 1788: It is worth remarking that on *All-Saints-Day* the poor people in *Staffordshire*, and perhaps in other country places, go from parish to parish *a souling*, as they call it; *i. e.* begging and *puling* (or singing small, as Bailey's Dict. explains *puling*) for *soul cakes*, or any good thing to make them merry? This custom a remnant of Popish superstition to pray for departed souls, particularly those of friends.

The Elizabethan 'round' is in fact one of the earliest written examples of the song. It was a chant / round / song sung long before those times.

Soalin' was a 'one-day-a-year' tradition and generally occurring around (from recollection) Boxing Day or Christmas Eve - again it depended on the town / parish / county, etc. On this day (evening) the less fortunate of the town would go from door-to-door to ask for comfits from the larders / purses etc of the more fortunate townfolk. It was considered VERY bad form (even to the extent of being cursed by The Lord) to turn away one who was 'A-Soalin' empty-handed.

The etymology of the expression 'a-soalin' actually either arises from (or gave rise TO - depending on your etymological source) the expression 'Wassail'. To go 'A-wassailing' was to go 'a-soalin': on the trip around town, while singing songs of the season, one would also carry an ivy-adorned bowl -called a "Pig" - for drink (particularly beer - or 'small beer' for children) and they would "Wassail" - the event became linguistically corrupted into 'a-soalin' while the activity of wassailing and carrying the 'wassail bowl' (or to [carry a]'pig and wassail') gave rise to that quaint pub name "Pig and Whistle".

Souling, or begging and puling for Soul-cakes, is another custom observed on All-Souls' eve. The "Soulers" go from house to house, and sing a song, for which they receive either soul-cakes, or pears, or apples, or ale. Children are the songsters during the day, but when night comes, and puts an end to work, the farmers' servants, and young men of the village, sally forth and startle the quiet night with their bawling: this ends, most commonly, in row and drunkenness. Here is the song itself:—

You gentlemen of England, I would have you to draw near
To these few lines which we have wrote, and you soon shall hear
Sweet melody of music all on this ev'ning clear,
For we are come a souling for apples and strong beer.

Step down into your cellar and see what you can find,
If your barrels are not empty, I hope you will prove kind,
I hope you will prove kind with your apples and strong beer,
We'll come no more a souling until another year.

Cold winter it is coming on, dark, dirty, wet, and cold,
To try your good-nature this night we do make bold;
This night we do make bold with your apples and strong beer,
We will come no more a souling until another year.

All the houses that we've been at, we have had both meat and drink;
So now we're dry with travelling I hope you'll on us think;
I hope you'll on us think with your apples and strong beer,
For we'll come no more a souling until another year.

God bless the master of this house and the mistress also,
And all the little children that round the table go,
Likewise your men and maidens, your cattle and your store,

And all that lies within your gates, I wish you ten times more;
I wish you ten times more with your **apples and strong beer**,
For we'll come no more a souling until another year.

Notice how "apple and strong beer" became "apple and strawber' " in later versions of the song.
The song of the children was short and to the point:—

Soul, soul, for an apple or two,
If you have no apples, pears will do;
Pray, good mistress, a soul-cake?"

III. How to make soul cake:

Soul Cakes are an echo of the sacrificial foods of the Celtic festival of Samhain held in early autumn. These little cakes were traditionally set out with glasses of wine on All Hallows Eve (31st October) for the souls of the dead. On All Saints Day (1st November) children would go "souling" calling out "Soul, Soul, for a Soul Cake: pray you good mistress, a soul cake".

Ingredients

3/4 cup butter

3/4 cup caster/superfine sugar

4 cups plain flour, sifted

3 egg yolks

1 teaspoon mixed spice

1 teaspoon allspice

3 tablespoons currants

a little milk

(see [measure conversions](#) for more information)

Method

- Cream the butter and sugar together until pale in colour and fluffy in texture.
- Beat in the egg yolks.
- Fold in the sifted flour and spices.
- Stir in the currants.
- Add enough milk to make a soft dough.
- Form into flat cakes and mark each top with a cross.
- Bake on a well-greased baking tray in a hot oven until golden.

IV. Peter, Paul and Mary

The group was created and managed by [Albert Grossman](#), who sought to create a folk "supergroup" by bringing together "a tall blonde (Mary Travers), a funny guy (Paul Stookey), and a good looking guy (Peter Yarrow)". He launched the group in 1961, booking them into the [The Bitter End](#), a coffee house and popular folk venue in [New York City's Greenwich Village](#). They recorded their first album, *Peter, Paul and Mary*, the following year. It included "[500 Miles](#)", "[Lemon Tree](#)", and the [Pete Seeger](#) hit tunes "[If I Had a Hammer](#)" (subtitled "(The Hammer Song)") and "[Where Have All the Flowers Gone?](#)". The album was listed on the [Billboard Magazine](#) Top Ten list for ten months and in the Top One Hundred for over three years.

The group made its television debut in either 1961 or 1962 on a talk show hosted by [Mike Wallace](#) and Joyce Davidson, though neither audio or video footage has yet been found. By [1963](#), Peter, Paul and Mary had recorded three albums. All three were in the Top ten the week of [President Kennedy's](#) assassination.

That year the group also released "[Puff the Magic Dragon](#)", which Yarrow and fellow [Cornell](#) student Leonard Lipton had written in 1959, and performed "[If I Had a Hammer](#)" at the [1963 March on Washington](#), best remembered for Reverend [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)'s "[I Have a Dream](#)" speech. One of their biggest hit singles was the [Bob Dylan](#) song "[Blowin' in the Wind](#)". They also sang other Bob Dylan songs, such as: "[The Times They Are a-Changin'](#)"; "Don't Think Twice, it's Alright"; and "When the Ship Comes In."

"[Leaving On A Jet Plane](#)", which in December 1969 became their only #1 (as well as their final Top 40) hit, was written by [John Denver](#) (who had already had some success with The Chad Mitchell Trio) and first appeared on their [Album 1700](#) in 1967. "Day Is Done", a #21 hit in June 1969, was the last Hot 100 hit the trio recorded.

The trio broke up in [1970](#) to pursue solo careers, but found little of the success they had experienced as a group, although Stookey's "[The Wedding Song \(There is Love\)](#)" (written for Yarrow's marriage to [Marybeth McCarthy](#), the niece of senator [Eugene McCarthy](#)) was a hit and has become a wedding standard since its 1971 release.

In [1978](#), they reunited for a concert to protest [nuclear energy](#), and have recorded albums together and toured since. They currently play around 45 shows a year. The group was inducted into the [Vocal Group Hall of Fame](#) in 1999.

(from left) [Mary Travers](#), [Paul Stookey](#) and [Peter Yarrow](#) onstage at New York's Westbury Music Fair on [August 5, 2006](#). The trio became political activists for their commitment to peace in Central America and for supporting musically and personally the peace and social justice movement in America. They were awarded the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience on [September 1, 1990](#).^[2]

V. Daniel Canosa

The Occidental Community Choir is thrilled to have at its helm Daniel Canosa, who replaced longtime director Doug Bowes in October 2004. Canosa studied composition and orchestral and choral conducting at the Argentine Catholic University and the Universidad Nacional de La Plata. He pursued his interest in the Baroque repertoire under Argentine maestro Sergio Siminovich. After some years of leading various choral groups in Argentina, Mr. Canosa founded and directed the critically acclaimed Conjunto Egmont, for which he was singled out in 1988 as one of the best conductors in the country.

Buenos Aires critics responded to his performances with enthusiasm: "A high level performance... Excellent... Very well elaborated. The conductor Daniel Canosa deserves special praise." --La Opinion, Buenos Aires, July 20, 1989.

In 1990 Canosa came to the U.S. as guest conductor for the Apollo Orchestra and Chorus in the Sierra foothills. His extensive repertoire there included symphonic and choral masterworks of all periods. He continued his study of Baroque music with conductor Nicholas McGegan in Berkeley, California.

Traveling to Europe, Daniel participated in master-classes at the Mozarteum Conservatory in Salzburg, Austria. In Munich he studied with the legendary maestro Sergiu Celibidache, music director of the Munich Philharmonic. In 1996 Canosa became the music director of the Nieuw Amsterdam Barokorkest en Koor, which performed on original instruments and the award-winning girls choir Davanti. With both groups he toured extensively in The Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Upon returning to California, Mr. Canosa became the artistic director and conductor of the Apollo Baroque Orchestra. Music critic William Glackin said, "Apollo Baroque Orchestra made a highly noteworthy impression with a couple of rare treats from the Baroque, well conducted by Argentinean Daniel Canosa." --The Sacramento Bee, December 4, 2000.

Canosa has also appeared as guest conductor with the Camellia Symphony and Auburn Symphony Orchestras. His all-Beethoven program with the Auburn Symphony was praised by critic Patricia Beach Smith:

"Pluck is what it takes to tackle Beethoven. The orchestra was always on cue. Daniel Canosa's careful conducting helped shepherd the orchestra in the right directions. Canosa's quiet, precise direction proved commanding as the orchestra performed the Symphony No. 7, landing its attacks, severe cutoffs and varied dynamics like a gymnast in fine form." --The Sacramento Bee, October 15, 2001.

In the spring of 2000, Mr. Canosa participated in the formation of Camerata California, a professional chamber chorus based in Sacramento, which has been performing to critical acclaim. He also has been directing the Mayflower Chorus in San Rafael since 1999. In addition to his conducting, Canosa has been active composing. His studies of music history and research into the original music of classical Greece have led to his original compositions to accompany the Greek dramas *Alcestis*, *Philoctetes*, and *Iphigenia in Tauris*. In 2004, he

composed the music for William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. An extended biographical reference to Daniel Canosa appears in the book *Career in the Music Industry*, career role models for young adults (Mitchell Lane, publishers).

Audio Links and Discography

If you subscribe to iTunes, BuyMusic, Rhapsody or a similar service, keyword in “A’ Soalin” and then you can listen to a sample from each artist.

YouTubes

Peter, Paul and Mary http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_fjXUk_30g

Peter, Paul and Mary (older) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rleWR6_0mq4

These select recordings can be purchased online:

Peter, Paul and Mary: <http://www.amazon.com/Moving-Paul-Mary-Peter/dp/B000002KA2>

Trifolkal: <http://tinyurl.com/5ce2wc>

References:

The above article about the song “A’ Soalin” was extracted from these websites. For more information, please read the articles:

<http://everything2.com/e2node/A%2520Soalin%2527>

<http://www.poemhunter.com/song/a-soalin/>

<http://www.takeourword.com/Issue020.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Paul_and_Mary#Discography

<http://books.google.com/books?id=2YoYAAAAIAAJ&dq=a+soalin>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=pT2zAAAAIAAJ&q=a+soalin&dq=a+soalin&pgis=1>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=aJNpAAAAIAAJ&q=a+soalin&dq=a+soalin>

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<http://books.google.com/books?id=SHo0AAAAMA AJ&pg=RA3-PA13#PRA3-PA13,M1>

<http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=7984&messages=51&page=1>

<http://www.occidentalchoir.org/director.html>

http://www.greenchronicle.com/recipes/soul_cake_recipe.htm

Book: [Notes and Queries](#), Nov. 15, 1851, page 381

Book: [Barthomley in Letters from a Former Rector to His Eldest Son](#) By Edward Hinchliffe,
1856:
