

## **Themes in Irish Folk Music**

All cultures share universal themes in their folk and contemporary songs. The most common by far is love, for nothing makes one feel as good and as bad as does love. This course will examine recurrent themes of traditional Irish folk ballads and lyrical songs, covering the period from medieval times to the present. We will examine songs of the sea, the supernatural, prison and martyrs, immigration/emigration, historical figures, love, rebellion, humor, children, and (of course) drinking. Emphasis will be on lyric and ballad, with only an incidental approach to the instrumental music. The eight sessions will be a mixture of discussion, listening to CDs, watching videos, hearing live performances by guest musicians, and participating in impromptu sing-songs. The eight sessions will be a combination of cultural, historical, and geographical information about the songs. Some songs will be broadcast to the group in conjunction with the lyrics so that anyone who cares to (and it is very much encouraged), can sing along. Participants are encouraged to bring to class recordings and/or lyrics of songs relevant to the theme(s) in discussion and share them with the group.

**Part One** – Songs of the sea and the supernatural

**Part Two** – Songs of prison and martyrs, historical figures, and rebellion

**Part Three** – Songs of immigration/emigration, humor, and children's songs

**Part Four** – Songs of love and drinking

**Leader:** Bill O'Neal is a retired high school teacher of English and semi-professional musician/singer who has regularly performed Irish folk music here and in Ireland for nearly four decades. A long time participant in the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry in the classroom experiences, he has also served for many years as technology liaison to The National Writing Project at Rider University and is a member of their leadership team. He graduated from TCNJ with a BA in philosophy and then completed his graduate-level teacher certification at Rider University.

**Tuesdays:** 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks: September 25 through November 13

**Location:** Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville