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PRESS RELEASE - February 4, 2026 - Asheville, NC

Burns Night and first annual Oscar Wong Whisky Tasting to support Asheville Writer in Residence in Dunkeld & Birnam, Scotland

Event: Asheville Sister Cities Inc. (ASCI) 2026 Robert Burns Night Supper; 5:00 - 9:30 pm Saturday, March 28, 2026; Biltmore DoubleTree (AKA DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Asheville - Biltmore) belatedly celebrating the 267th birthday of the Bard of Scotland. URL: ashevillesistercities.org/burns

Oscar Wong Whisky Tasting: New in 2026 and in recognition of pioneer craft brewer, Oscar Wong, whose leadership and friendship helped so many causes in the Asheville community, ASCI will be naming the annual whisky tasting at Burns Night in his honor and memory. Wong shared his extensive experience with the spirits world by hosting the whisky tasting at all previous ASCI Burns Nights.

Fundraiser: Since 2019, Asheville Sister Cities Inc., a 501c3 organization, has raised funds annually at Burns Night for projects in the Asheville and the Scottish community of Dunkeld & Birnam. The 2026 Burns Night Fundraiser will raise £2,000 to support an Asheville Writer in Residence in Dunkeld & Birnam, Elizabeth Kostova. The charity fundraiser is open to the public and winners need not be present to claim auction and raffle prizes. Kostova, a New York Times bestselling author, will be visiting Dunkeld & Birnam for eight weeks in the Spring of 2026. While in Scotland, Kostova will share her wide experience with the local community, including schools and senior citizens groups, by leading writing workshops, participating in Climate Café and the Niel Gow Festival, and working on projects around the theme of 'A River of Words'. Kostova lives in Asheville, North Carolina, which has been Dunkeld & Birnam's sister city since 2017. In addition to her writing, Kostova works on post-hurricane recovery, serves on the board of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association, and teaches and lectures internationally.

Program: The evening's ceremony follows a ritual set down since the first Burns Night in 1801. Entertainment includes piper Alex Stewart, dancers from the Asheville branch of the Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance, and appearing as StrathSpan: fiddler Nora Garver, cellist Julia Weatherford, and piper Cathleen Nixon.

Burns Night: Held on the birthday of Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns 1759-1796, Burns Night is a worldwide celebration of Scottish heritage and traditions and Burns's ideals which have shaped Scotland and the world. Burns lived at a time of drastic transition as Scottish culture and traditions were diluted by union with England. Burns devoted the end of his life to preserving these traditions of love of freedom, country, nature, and life through over 700 songs and poems including the second most popular song in English, Auld Lang Syne. Western North Carolina has strong ties with the Scots. By the time of the Civil War, tens of thousands of Scots and Ulster Scots had migrated to Western North Carolina. 2.9% of North Carolinians, the highest percentage nationally, self-identify as Ulster Scots.

Takeaway: We wish all to feel welcome in takin' a cup o' kindness in celebration of Robert Burns and Scottish culture regardless of one's own heritage. Join us in the fun of following a traditional Burns Night Ceremony filled with music and song for a worthy cause!

Contact: Tom Good, ASCI 2026 Robert Burns Night Supper Event Director by text at 802-793-7571 or email tomgood@ecologicarchitecture.com.