

Deirdre of the Sorrows

A musical

Book and lyrics By Rene Zabel

Music by Jenna Cox

Deirdre's Lament adapted from 11th century Irish poem,

Music by Rene Zabel



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

DEIRDRE (Dayr'druh), the most beautiful women in Ireland.

KING CONNOR, CONNOR MACNESSA, High King of Ireland.

MAIRE (My-ra), Deirdre's nurse.

NAISI (Nee'sha), Red Branch warrior. Deirdre's lover.

FERGUS, King Connor's foster father and from whom he stole the crown.

MALCOM, Deirdre's father. King Connor's Harper

CATHBAD (Kaffa), King Connor's Druid Priest

Ensemble: These can all be double cast as needed.

Courtiers

ELVA, Deirdre's mother.

CUCHULAIN (Koo-hull'in), The hound of Ulster, Red Branch warrior.

NESSA, King Connor's mother.

Scáthach (Skah-hah): Warrior Queen of the Isle of Skye

Barach - Neighboring chieftain.

CUCHULAIN (Koo-hull'in), The hound of Ulster, Red Branch warriors

Red Branch warriors

Wenches

The sons of Uisnach (OOshnah):

AINNLE (own-ya), Red Branch warrior. Naisi's brother.

ARDEN, Red Branch warrior. Naisi's brother.

SETTINGS

Emain Macha (Ev'in Mah'ha)

Cottage in the woods

The woods

Scotland

Isle of Skye

OTHER NOTABLE WORDS

Geas/geasa gesh/gesha

SUMMARY

This modern retelling of the legend of Deirdre of the Sorrows, depicts a story of love, jealousy, betrayal, war, and death.

Deirdre of the Sorrows of a first century Iris legend, told with contemporary Irish music, ala, Once meets River Dance.

There are strong female characters who sword fight, with opposing themes of love, revenge, loyalty and betrayal.

ACT ONE

Medieval Ireland - the Kingdom of
Emain Macha (Evan Mah-ha).

PROLOGUE

[SONG NUMBER 1: COURT DANCE]

Samhain (Sow-in) in CONNOR'S (KING
CONNOR) Feasting Hall, Emain Macha
Ireland. Opening plays Court Dance
when MALCOM enters playing the
harp.

[SONG NUMBER 2: TALE OF DEIRDRE]

MALCOM

I SHALL TELL YOU A STORY
OF LOVE - A TALE OF SAD WOE
A TALE OF SUCH BEAUTY
EMAIN MACHA DID KNOW
I SHALL TELL YOU THE STORY
THE KING LED HIS PEOPLE WELL
HIS RED BRANCH HAD GLORY
AS OUR STORY WILL TELL

(CONNOR and his mother NESSA enter and dance the Royal Court Dance, which plays underneath the dialogue.)

CONNOR

Come, my dearest mother, shall we begin the dance?

NESSA

You should dance with Ladies of the court, not your Mother.

CONNOR

No, I wish to dance with you.

(They dance for a few beats)

NESSA

(as CONNOR spins her)

It is time you thought of marriage...You are of that age, my son.

CONNOR

Mother, I will find one in my own time. (beat) But fear not, Cathbad's (Kaffa) vision has shown the first I am to marry. I have already set my eyes on her.

NESSA

So be it then...I do trust Cathbad (Kaffa)

(FERGUS enters with a

COURTIER.)

FERGUS

(as he twirls his partner)

My dear, you are light on your feet.

COURTIER 1

Why thank you, your Grace.

(CUCHULAIN joins the dance with COURTIER 2 as other COURTIERS enter)

FERGUS

Oh, to be a much younger man.

(The COURTIER throws her head back laughing as FERGUS picks her up and twirls her.)

CONNOR

(laughing)

The Hound! Let us see how swift of foot you are. Not bad for a hardened warrior.

(CUCHULAIN dances a few intricate steps towards CONNOR.)

CUCHULAIN

(bows)

Your Majesty.

CONNOR

Hound, you speak volumes with your nimble foot work.

(COURTIER 2 curtsies.

WARRIORS and COURTIERS enter dancing. The dance continues for a few bars, a loud scream echoes in the hall. The WARRIORS run to gather their weapons.)

WARRIOR 1

(draws his sword)

What was that?

(Another scream is heard. The WARRIORS draw swords. ELVA in late stage of pregnancy enters.)

ELVA

Malcom!

(MALCOM crosses to ELVA, as she falls to the floor.)

WARRIOR 3

We must be under attack. To arms!

WARRIOR 2

To arms!

(All WARRIORS draw swords, loudly cross to the KING.)

CONNOR

I will have silence!

CUCHULAIN

(to the WARRIORS)

Keep your heads about you. Stay where you are.

(points to WARRIOR 1)

CUCHULAIN [CONT'D]

Go...see if you find anything untoward. That wasn't a cry of battle, but a cry of pain.

(The WARRIOR complies,
exits. CUCHULAIN crosses to)

ELVA)

My lady, are you hurt? Was that your cry?

(Everyone crowds around
ELVA.)

ELVA

No, it was my child. Something must be wrong.

CONNOR

Everyone, please give her some space!

MALCOM

(with tears)

Cathbad, highest of Druids, bring us your wise words of the ages. Why does our child cry, when not even born?

(CATHBAD crosses to ELVA,
and places his hand on her
stomach.)

MALCOM {CONT'D}

Cathbad, would you grant us a prophecy? Is there some doom that will come to us?

(CATHBAD closes his eyes,
listening)

CATHBAD

Beauty has a new name...Deirdre...She cries for she does not want to be born under a curse.

ELVA

(wraps her arms around her
belly)

A curse? No!

CATHBAD

This child, though beautiful beyond any in the land, will only bring death to Emain Macha and the Red Branch. The blood of the martyrs will spill through the Uisnach.

MALCOM

HARK NOW, THE CURSE IS SPOKEN

OF DEATH - TO ONE STILL NOT BORN

THE CURSE CANNOT BE BROKEN

CATHBAD DID WARN

CONNOR

I cannot condone the murdering of a child. You know the gesa, on me. I cannot, WILL NOT, murder a female...especially NOT a female child.

[SONG NUMBER 3: BEAUTY THAT KILLS]

(The WARRIORS and COURTIERS react to this.)

COURTIER 1

WE MUST SAVE OUR LAND.

COURTIER 3

SAVE THE KINGDOM FROM THIS CURSE.

WARRIOR 2

THIS CHILD CANNOT LIVE!

WARRIORS & COURTIERS

A CURSE AS THIS MUST NOT STAND

(CATHBAD raises his hands.
Every one quiets.)

WARRIORS

Our fate is in your hands!

CATHBAD

Your Highness, you must listen to reason.

BORN WITH THE BEAUTY

POSSESSED BY NO OTHER

HER FACE LIKE AND ANGEL

PULLS EVERYONE UNDER

NESSA/COURTIERS

WITH BEAUTY THAT KILLS,

RED BRANCH ARE MARTYRS.

WITH BEAUTY THAT KILLS

MEN WILL BE SLAIN

She cannot live! She must die!

WITH BEAUTY THAT KILLS

THEIR LIVES WE'LL NOT BARTER

WITH BEAUTY THAT KILLS

RED BRANCH WILL FALL.

MALCOM

No...Please! Not our child--

(MALCOM protectively places
his arm around Elva. The
COURTIERS and WARRIORS
loudly grumble their protest
against the child.
CONNOR silences the crowd)

CONNOR

Enough! (beat) Cathbad, under Our protection, Deirdre will be raised away from our court. When she comes of age I will marry her; She will be mine. No one will dare cross the King.