

WILLIAM YEATS

TWO PLAYS
FOR DANCERS

William Butler Yeats

Two plays for dancers

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PREFACE

In a note at the end of my last book 'The Wild Swans at Coole' (Cuala Press.) I explained why I preferred this kind of drama, and where I had found my models, and where and how my first play after this kind was performed, and when and how I would have it performed in the future. I can but refer the reader to the note or to the long introduction to 'Certain Noble Plays of Japan' (Cuala Press.)

W. B. Yeats. October 11th. 1918

P. S. That I might write 'The Dreaming of the Bones,' Mr. W. A. Henderson with great kindness wrote out for me all historical allusions to Dervorgilla.

THE DREAMING OF THE BONES

The stage is any bare place in a room close to the wall. A screen with a pattern of mountain and sky can stand against the wall, or a curtain with a like pattern hang upon it, but the pattern must only symbolize or suggest. One musician enters and then two others, the first stands singing while the others take their places. Then all three sit down against the wall by their instruments, which are already there – a drum, a zither, and a flute. Or they unfold a cloth as in 'The Hawk's Well,' while the instruments are carried in.

FIRST MUSICIAN

(or all three musicians, singing)

Why does my heart beat so?
Did not a shadow pass?
It passed but a moment ago.
Who can have trod in the grass?
What rogue is night-wandering?
Have not old writers said
That dizzy dreams can spring
From the dry bones of the dead?
And many a night it seems
That all the valley fills
With those fantastic dreams.
They overflow the hills,
So passionate is a shade,
Like wine that fills to the top
A grey-green cup of jade,
Or maybe an agate cup.
(speaking) The hour before dawn and the moon covered up.
The little village of Abbey is covered up;
The little narrow trodden way that runs
From the white road to the Abbey of Corcomroe
Is covered up; and all about the hills
Are like a circle of Agate or of Jade.
Somewhere among great rocks on the scarce grass
Birds cry, they cry their loneliness.
Even the sunlight can be lonely here,
Even hot noon is lonely. I hear a footfall —
A young man with a lantern comes this way.
He seems an Aran fisher, for he wears
The flannel bawneen and the cow-hide shoe.
He stumbles wearily, and stumbling prays.

(A young man enters, praying in Irish)

Once more the birds cry in their loneliness,
But now they wheel about our heads; and now
They have dropped on the grey stone to the north-east.

(A man and a girl both in the costume of a past time, come in. They wear heroic masks)

YOUNG MAN

(raising his lantern)
Who is there? I cannot see what you are like,
Come to the light.

STRANGER

But what have you to fear?

YOUNG MAN

And why have you come creeping through the dark.

(The Girl blows out lantern)

The wind has blown my lantern out. Where are you?
I saw a pair of heads against the sky
And lost them after, but you are in the right
I should not be afraid in County Clare;
And should be or should not be have no choice,
I have to put myself into your hands,
Now that my candle's out.

STRANGER

You have fought in Dublin?

YOUNG MAN

I was in the Post Office, and if taken
I shall be put against a wall and shot.

STRANGER

You know some place of refuge, have some plan
Or friend who will come to meet you?

YOUNG MAN

I am to lie
At daybreak on the mountain and keep watch
Until an Aran coracle puts in
At Muckanish or at the rocky shore
Under Finvarra, but would break my neck
If I went stumbling there alone in the dark.

STRANGER

We know the pathways that the sheep tread out,
And all the hiding-places of the hills,
And that they had better hiding-places once.

YOUNG MAN

You'd say they had better before English robbers
Cut down the trees or set them upon fire
For fear their owners might find shelter there.
What is that sound?

STRANGER

An old horse gone astray
He has been wandering on the road all night.

YOUNG MAN

I took him for a man and horse. Police
Are out upon the roads. In the late Rising
I think there was no man of us but hated
To fire at soldiers who but did their duty
And were not of our race, but when a man
Is born in Ireland and of Irish stock
When he takes part against us —

STRANGER

I will put you safe,
No living man shall set his eyes upon you.
I will not answer for the dead.

YOUNG MAN

The dead?

STRANGER

For certain days the stones where you must lie
Have in the hour before the break of day
Been haunted.

YOUNG MAN

But I was not born at midnight.

STRANGER

Many a man born in the full daylight
Can see them plain, will pass them on the high-road
Or in the crowded market-place of the town,

And never know that they have passed.

YOUNG MAN

My Grandam
Would have it they did penance everywhere
Or lived through their old lives again.

STRANGER

In a dream;
And some for an old scruple must hang spitted
Upon the swaying tops of lofty trees;
Some are consumed in fire, some withered up
By hail and sleet out of the wintry North,
And some but live through their old lives again.

YOUNG MAN

Well, let them dream into what shape they please
And fill waste mountains with the invisible tumult
Of the fantastic conscience. I have no dread;
They cannot put me into jail or shoot me,
And seeing that their blood has returned to fields
That have grown red from drinking blood like mine
They would not if they could betray.

STRANGER

This pathway
Runs to the ruined Abbey of Corcomroe;
The Abbey passed, we are soon among the stone
And shall be at the ridge before the cocks
Of Aughanish or Bailevlehan
Or grey Aughtmana shake their wings and cry.

(They go round the stage once)

FIRST MUSICIAN

(speaking) They've passed the shallow well and the flat stone
Fouled by the drinking cattle, the narrow lane
Where mourners for five centuries have carried
Noble or peasant to his burial.
An owl is crying out above their heads.
(singing) Why should the heart take fright
What sets it beating so?
The bitter sweetness of the night
Has made it but a lonely thing.
Red bird of March, begin to crow,
Up with the neck and clap the wing,
Red cock, and crow.

(They go once round the stage. The first musician speaks.)

And now they have climbed through the long grassy field
And passed the ragged thorn trees and the gap
In the ancient hedge; and the tomb-nested owl
At the foot's level beats with a vague wing.
(singing) My head is in a cloud;
I'd let the whole world go.
My rascal heart is proud
Remembering and remembering.
Red bird of March, begin to crow,
Up with the neck and clap the wing
Red cock and crow.

(They go round the stage. The first musician speaks.)

They are among the stones above the ash
Above the briar and thorn and the scarce grass;
Hidden amid the shadow far below them
The cat-headed bird is crying out.
(singing) The dreaming bones cry out
Because the night winds blow
And heaven's a cloudy blot;
Calamity can have its fling.
Red bird of March begin to crow,
Up with the neck and clap the wing
Red cock and crow.

THE STRANGER

We're almost at the summit and can rest.
The road is a faint shadow there; and there
The abbey lies amid its broken tombs.
In the old days we should have heard a bell
Calling the monks before day broke to pray;
And when the day has broken on the ridge,
The crowing of its cocks.

YOUNG MAN

Is there no house
Famous for sanctity or architectural beauty
In Clare or Kerry, or in all wide Connacht
The enemy has not unroofed?

STRANGER

Close to the altar
Broken by wind and frost and worn by time
Donogh O'Brien has a tomb, a name in Latin.
He wore fine clothes and knew the secrets of women
But he rebelled against the King of Thomond
And died in his youth.

YOUNG MAN

And why should he rebel?
The King of Thomond was his rightful master.
It was men like Donogh who made Ireland weak —
My curse on all that troop, and when I die
I'll leave my body, if I have any choice,
Far from his ivy tod and his owl; have those
Who, if your tale is true, work out a penance
Upon the mountain-top where I am to hide,
Come from the Abbey graveyard?

THE GIRL

They have not that luck,
But are more lonely, those that are buried there,

Warred in the heat of the blood; if they were rebels
Some momentary impulse made them rebels
Or the comandment of some petty king
Who hated Thomond. Being but common sinners,
No callers in of the alien from oversea
They and their enemies of Thomond's party
Mix in a brief dream battle above their bones,
Or make one drove or drift in amity,
Or in the hurry of the heavenly round
Forget their earthly names; these are alone
Being accursed.

YOUNG MAN

And if what seems is true
And there are more upon the other side
Than on this side of death, many a ghost
Must meet them face to face and pass the word
Even upon this grey and desolate hill.

YOUNG GIRL

Until this hour no ghost or living man
Has spoken though seven centuries have run
Since they, weary of life and of men's eyes,
Flung down their bones in some forgotten place
Being accursed.

YOUNG MAN

I have heard that there are souls
Who, having sinned after a monstrous fashion
Take on them, being dead, a monstrous image

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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