

PERUSAL SCRIPT

THE CHILDREN OF LIR

Adapted by Genevieve Aichele

Theatre Tales from Around The World *SERIES*



Newport, Maine

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THE CHILDREN OF LIR

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CHARACTERS — 4 female, 7 male, 2 narrators, 4-8 elementals

Narrator 1(M)

Narrator 2 (F)

Lir, one of the Five Kings of Ireland (M)

Ove, older daughter of Dearg (F)

Dearg, High King of Ireland (M)

Fionula, Lir and Ove's eldest (F)

Aed, Fionula's twin brother(M)

Fiachra, third child of Lir (M)

Conn, fourth child of Air (M)

Oifa, Dearg's younger daughter (F)

Mac Howg, the Hermit (M)

Deoch, Princess of Munster (F)

Lairgnen, Prince of Connaught (M)

Elementals (4-8) play Foster Daughters, members of the High Court, wind, sea, etc.

Source Material: *Celtic Fairy Tales* by Joseph Jacobs, and *Great Folk Tales & Fairy Tales of Ireland* by Mary McGarry

THE CHILDREN OF LIR adapted from Irish folk lore by Genevieve Aichele. 4f, 7m, 6-10 either. About 20 minutes. A very early step-mother story, this time out of jealousy for the love of Lir, her husband, being lavished on his children of Oifa's deceased sister, Ove, she turns them into swans to live nine centuries away from those they love. Her treachery is found out and her High King father, Dearg, turns her into a Demon — that which she feared most. As their lives as swans would end when the Prince of the North married the Princess of the South, so, too does this story end with the Children of Lir reunited in life before they are united in death. Part of the TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD SERIES. **ORDER #3141**

Genevieve Aichele is Founding Executive Director of New Hampshire Theatre Project in Portsmouth, and has performed, directed and taught theatre arts both nationally and internationally for over 35 years, including 20 years of directing the NHTP Youth Repertory Company.

Genevieve has written dozens of story theatre scripts for use both onstage and in the classroom. Her adult scripts include *Neighborhoods* (2001 Portsmouth Spotlight Community Arts Award); original adaptations of *Lysistrata* and *Finding the Prince*; and *Dreaming Again*, commissioned in 2011 by the NH Humanities Council.

As a storyteller, Genevieve performs with musician Randy Armstrong in *World Tales*. Their two CD's have won numerous national and international awards. Her first audiobook recording, *Forest Secrets* by Tracy Kane, was released in 2012. *Ocean Secrets*, her first novel for young readers co-written with Tracy Kane, was released in May 2014.

Genevieve received the 2001 New Hampshire Governors Award for Excellence in Arts in Education and the 2008 NH Theatre Award for her work with youth. In 2002, she received an award for Outstanding Achievement in American Theatre from the New England Theatre Conference.

THE CHILDREN OF LIR

SCENE 1 – The Court of the High King

All characters in tableau as the Court.

NARRATOR 1: A long, long time ago, in the age of gods and heroes, the five kings of Ireland met to see who would become the High King. King Lir of the White Field expected that surely he would be elected.

(Music. Dearg is crowned High King.)

NARRATOR 2: But instead, Dearg, son of Daghdá, was chosen because his father had been a great Druid. Lir was angry and left the Assembly of Kings

NARRATOR 1: But Dearg called him back.

DEARG: King Lir, we must have peace in the land. So that you and I may be bound in kinship, please accept one of my foster daughters as your wife.

(Foster daughters, including OVE and OIFA, are presented.)

NARRATOR 2: Lir was pleased with this offering and he chose the eldest foster daughter.

LIR: What is your name?

OVE: My name is Ove, sire.

LIR: She is the noblest of them all.

NARRATOR 1: So Lir and Ove were married, and Dearg blessed them with his Druid's wand.

DEARG: My blessings on you both. Lir of the White Field, pray that you be a good husband to Ove, my beloved foster child, daughter of my heart.

LIR: I will love her as my life.

SCENE 2 – The Hill of the White Field

NARRATOR 2: Lir and Ove went to live on the Hill of the White Field. They were blessed with four children.

OVE: First, the twins – Fionula and her brother Aed. And then Fiachra...

LIR: Another son!

OVE: And finally my youngest son, Conn... for whom I gave my life.

(OVE has died.)

LIR: Noooooo!

NARRATOR 1: When Ove died, Lir mourned bitterly for he had come to love her very much. But his great love for his children kept him from dying of grief.

(LIR gathers his children around him.)

NARRATOR 2: Indeed, anyone who saw the four children of Lir...

LIR: Could not help giving them the love of his soul.

NARRATOR 2: When Dearg heard of the death, he grieved for Lir and sent Ove's sister Oifa to comfort him.

(OIFA arrives at the Hill of the White Field. LIR greets her.)

OIFA: Noble Lir, my foster father has sent me to be your new wife.

NARRATOR 1: Lir accepted Oifa into his home...

LIR: But you must promise to give my children only love and affection.

OIFA: Of course, I promise.

NARRATOR 2: And so Oifa became the children's stepmother. She loved them...

OIFA: At first.

NARRATOR 1: But the more Lir doted on them...

LIR: Come my beautiful Fionula, my darling sons, tell me what wondrous adventures befell you today?

(LIR gathers his children around him.)

NARRATOR 1: The more she was filled with jealousy and hatred.

OIFA: Lir is supposed to be my husband, but he loves his children far more than he will ever love me.

NARRATOR 2: Still, she hid her jealousy well.

NARRATOR 1: One morning, she invited the children to travel with her to visit her foster-father Dearg.

OIFA: Won't we have a lovely visit, my dears?

FIONULA: Please, father, I do not want to go with her.

LIR: Why so, my beloved Fionula?

FIONULA: I do not know.

(She pauses, looking at OIFA)

I had a dream of warning.

OIFA: Nonsense, they will all be safe with me. I love these children as my own.

NARRATOR 2: So Lir gave his permission and they set off on the journey to visit King Dearg.

SCENE 3 – The Lake of the Oaks

NARRATOR 1: Halfway through the journey, they arrived at the Lake of the Oaks.

OIFA: Wouldn't you all like to swim in this beautiful lake?

FIACHRA: Yes! Let's go!!!

(The boys jump in the water but FIONULA hesitates.)

OIFA: You should join your brothers, Fionula. They always look to you for guidance.

(FIONULA reluctantly swims out into the lake.)

NARRATOR 2: As soon as Fionula swam out to her brothers, Oifa pulled a Druid's wand from beneath her cloak and she began to chant.

(OIFA raises her wand.)

OIFA: Out with you upon the wild waves, children of the king! Henceforth your cries shall be with the flocks of birds!

NARRATOR 1: Instantly, Fionula and her brothers were turned into four beautiful, perfectly white swans.

(Music. The children are transformed into swans.)

FIONULA: Wicked and treacherous woman, give us back our human shapes or Lir our father will punish you!

OIFA: The lake is deep, and the children of Lir were drowned. That is the story I will tell your father. This spell cannot be undone until the Prince of the North marries the Princess of the South.

AED: How long must we remain swans?

(OIFA raises her wand again.)

OIFA: Three hundred years shall you be on this lake, and another three hundred upon the Sea of Moyle, and then another three hundred beside the Isle of Glora.

CONN/FIACHRA: Nine hundred years!

FIONULA: It would have been kinder to kill us.

OIFA: You shall keep your human hearts and human speech, and you will sing more sweetly than swans have ever sung.

(OIFA turns to exit.)

Fare thee well, children of Lir. I could have loved you had your father not loved you so well.

SCENE 4 – The Hill of the White Field

NARRATOR 2: When Oifa returned home, Lir was beside himself with worry.

LIR: Where have you been? Where are my children?

OIFA: Alas, they have drowned in the Lake of the Oaks.

LIR: All my darlings lost! This cannot be true!

OIFA: It is true. Despite my warning, they swam out to the deepest part of the lake and did not return.

LIR: Never! I don't believe you!

OIFA: I am your wife who loves you, and loved your drowned children as well.

LIR: Noooo!!

(LIR exits running.)

SCENE 5 – The Lake of the Oaks

NARRATOR 1: In despair, Lir ran to the lake which lay shimmering like silver under the moon. Four swans came swimming toward him, singing so sweetly he wept with the beauty of their voices.

(Music. The swans sing to LIR.)

NARRATOR 2: Then they told him what had happened.

FIONULA: It was Oifa, father.

AED: She turned us into swans with her Druid's wand.

CONN: And she said we would stay this way...

FIACHRA: For nine hundred years!

FIONULA: Help us, father, you must help us!

LIR: (*grimly*) Oifa will be brought before the High King.

FOUR MORE PAGES TO THE END:

NARRATOR 2: And the is the story of the children of Lir.

THE END

NAME PRONUNCIATIONS

Dearg – (d)JERE -rig

Lir – LEAR

Oife – EE-fah (modern spelling is Aoife)

Ove – OOH-vay

Fionula – Fin-NOO-lah

Aed – AiD

Fiachra – FEE-uh-krah

Conn – KAAN

Mac Howg – Mack- HOWG

Lairgnen – LAIR-nen

Deoch – Dee-OCH

NOTES ON STAGING

The Elementals are a group of actors who play non-speaking “extra” roles. They can become members of the High Court, additional foster daughters, and even non-human characters like water or wind. Elemental movement can add magic and mystery to a scene. Examples:

- Children’s Transformation to Swans – Elementals swirl onstage with pieces of white fabric, dancing around the children as music plays. This fabric is then draped over the children like capes that they can later use as wings.
- Oife’s Transformation to Air Demon – Elementals swirl onstage with black or grey raggedy fabric to cover Oife’s dress as she transforms to a demon. Perhaps they also carry additional fabric strips to swirl as wind around her.
- The Sea of Moyle – Elementals literally become the wind and waves through movement, carrying fabric strips to suggest their particular element. Alternatively two players might manipulate a large piece of blue fabric to recreate the sea (a more Asian style of theatre) or painted cardboard waves (pantomime style).

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