

A NEW OPERA: THE CURSE ON DYVED

Composed by Christopher Wicks

Saturday, 9 March at 7:00 pm

Sunday, 10 March at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm

UNLEY UNITING CHURCH, 187 UNLEY ROAD



THE CURSE ON DYVED
AN OPERA COMPOSED BY CHRISTOPHER M. WICKS
OP. 876

on a libretto from the Third Branch of the Mabinogi:
medieval Welsh folklore as translated by Lady Caroline Guest
(19th century)

CAST AND CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE:

Manawydan, a disinherited prince	Jamie Moffatt
Pryderi, prince of Dyved	Jordan Newsham
Rhiannon, queen of Dyved	Michele de Courcy
Kicva, Pryderi's noble lady and princess	Katelyn Crawford
Llwyd, a sorcerer dressed as a bishop	Jordan Newsham

FEATURING ENSEMBLE DANCERS FROM THE NEWRY SCHOOL:

Carw Tylwyth Teg (Fairy Deer): Zora Blunk and Ayla Cocks
LLygod Tylwyth Teg (Fairy Mice):

Tinaya Abayasekera and Elka Blunk

Ceffyl Gwyn (White horse): Annie Young

Gwenaby (Llwyd's wife): Coral Freeth

Baedd Gwyn (White boar): Imogen Knight

Conductor and Director: Jamie Lynn Webster

Pianists: Jacqui Maynard and Jamie Lynn Webster

Stage Director: Christopher Bond

Choreographer: Coral Freeth

Kaurna miyurna, Kaurna yarta, ngadlu tampinthi
(We recognise Kaurna people & their land)



SYNOPSIS:

OVERTURE

As the grand chords from the piano mark the opening of the ancient tale, two fairy deer emerge, scouting their surroundings before they reveal a portal between the realm of the fairy folk (Tylwyth Teg) and the mortal kingdom of Dyved. Coming through the portal, mice scamper to dance and play. A white horse leaps and trots ahead of the sorcerer Llwyd and his fairy lady Gwenaby. Llwyd and Gwenaby process regally, pausing to survey the land of the mortals before continuing on their way. A white boar enters through the portal as well, and the fairy world creatures—the deer, the boar, the horse, and the mice, all join together for a dance. When they hear the sounds of women approaching, they scurry away.

The women are none other than Rhiannon, the great queen of Dyved, and Princess Kicva, her daughter-in-law. The two dance a pavane affectionately together as they await the return of Prince Pryderi (Rhiannon's son and Kicva's husband) from a faraway land. As the overture ends and Rhiannon and Kicva retire to the castle, we hear the rough and tumble sounds of Pryderi and his friend Manawydan, who are returning from fighting in Ireland.

SCENE ONE:

When Pryderi and Manawydan stop to rest in a desolate place on their journey, Manawydan confides in Pryderi about his uncertain future: he is a disinherited prince with nowhere to call home. Pryderi comforts Manawydan, acknowledging their bonds of friendship forged in the brotherhood and bravery of battle, and then is inspired by a plan: if Manawydan returns to Pryderi's kingdom of Dyved, then Manawydan could marry Pryderi's dear mother, the widowed Queen Rhiannon. Manawydan is deeply moved and heartened at the prospect of finding belonging once again, and the two travel forth in the confidence.

SCENE TWO:

Pryderi and Manawydan are warmly welcomed upon their return to the castle in Dyved where Pryderi reunites with his wife Kicva and mother Rhiannon, and Manawydan is introduced. The four strengthen their bonds through a figured dance that brings them together in song. Palace guests adorn the hall with giant daffodils in celebration. Queen Rhiannon calls her son Pryderi aside to inquire about Manawydan, and Manawydan pulls Pryderi aside likewise to inquire about Rhiannon, while Kicva looks on in delight. Rhiannon and Manawydan are smitten with the prospect of a new life together after the hardships and losses each has overcome. Pryderi offers his blessing to the union, and the royal quartet sings of happiness and prosperity.

SCENE THREE:

To celebrate the new marriage, the royal quartet decides to go on a hunt together. While they don their cloaks and gather their weapons, the fairy deer prance through the woods, swiftly leaving before the hunters approach. Manawydan and his new family sing about the delight of sport and the abundance of game in the woods, when a storm interrupts them, filling all with darkness, and scattering the four in all directions. The fairy creatures (Tylwyth Teg) infiltrate the space as the storm continues to billow and rage.

SCENE FOUR:

When the darkness clears, Pryderi, Kicva, Manawydan, and Rhiannon stumble to find one another again through the wreckage of the storm, and collectively grieve the loss of their kingdom—their people have all disappeared, and their castle and lands lie empty. Nevertheless, they resolve to manage as best they can going forward, enjoying the fruits of the land and working together in an abundance of hope. As the royal family commences their new journey, the fairy Gwenaby enters, dancing across the land of Dyved, which is now uninhabited by mortals.

SCENE FIVE:

Time has passed, and as circumstances become increasingly desperate, Manawydan, Pryderi, and Rhiannon go out to hunt. As each takes off their cloaks, they confide their fears for the future and their humility against such uncertainty. When they utter a collective sigh of resignation, the fairy deer magically appear, revealing a portal to a castle materialising before their eyes. The white boar emerges from the forest, trotting through the woods before disappearing into the castle. Pryderi is inspired to take a chance, declaring his intention to follow into the castle, against the objections of Rhiannon and Manawydan. When Pryderi enters but doesn't return, Rhiannon becomes distraught, fearful that she will lose her son forever and she argues with Manawydan that she must save him. Manawydan pleads with Rhiannon not to leave him, but the great Queen is fixed in her purpose. When she enters the castle and does not return, Manawydan is left bewildered and alone. He resolves to tell Kicva what has happened and to seek her advice.

SCENE SIX:

Kicva laments the loss of her husband Pryderi and mother-in-law Rhiannon, and shares her fears about how life will carry on with Manawydan, whom she knows relatively little. Manawydan comforts Kicva, assuring that he will treat her, his daughter-in-law, with the same friendship forged with Pryderi. The two will need to farm in order to survive, and Manawydan suggests they travel east, to England, where "any foolish rascal can get by". Manawydan offers Kicva his cloak, and as they leave the land of Dyved, the white boar appears, trotting through the empty land once more.

SCENE SEVEN:

After three years farming in England, Manawydan and Kicva return to the land of Dyved. Their friendship has grown considerably through their trials and travails, and Manawydan playfully urges Kicva to recount his skill and deeds during their time away. Kicva responds in kind, extolling his strength, skill, and their resulting prosperity.

SCENE SEVEN CONT.:

Then, Manawydan's mood changes suddenly as he explains that a swarm of mice has eaten all of their crops once again in Dyved, and reveals a mouse he has captured—one that was slower and rounder than the others. He is at his wit's end, and describes his intended revenge: to take the mouse to a high hill and dash it against the rocks below.

SCENE EIGHT:

When Manawydan arrives at the hill, a mysterious bishop with a white horse suddenly appears, and demands that Manawydan spare the mouse. Manawydan questions the bishop—how is it that he dwells in Dyved when none have been seen there for years, including his dear Queen Rhiannon and Prince Pryderi? The mysterious bishop begins to plead, offering increasing amounts of money for the mouse, which Manawydan refuses, content to carry out his plan to dash the mouse against the rocks. Finally, the bishop confesses that the mouse is actually Gwenaby, his wife who is pregnant with child. Manawydan then recognises that the bishop is indeed the sorcerer Llwyd, who has caused desolation in the land of Dyved, and he begins his negotiation: he will release the mouse to Llwyd's safe keeping provided that Llwyd recover the lands and people of Dyved, restore Rhiannon and Pryderi, and give his word that he will never trespass in the land of Dyved again. Llwyd accepts, and scurries away with Gwenaby at his side.

SCENE NINE:

With the curse lifted, Rhiannon, Pryderi, and Kicva reunite with Manawydan at the castle, greeting one another with affection, and are once more a family. The four strengthen and renew their bonds through a figured dance that brings them together in song, this time singing about freedom, love and prosperity: “The only bondage which can be intended is bond of love, which holds us in a ring, Our hands united! ...To share in love is greatest bliss of all”. Palace guests adorn the hall with giant daffodils in celebration. With that, the ancient tale comes to a close.

CHRISTOPHER WICKS

(he/him)

Composer

Christopher Wicks (b. 1975) has been the Composer-in-Residence of the Welsh Society of Oregon since 2015, when his arrangement of the Welsh folk hymn Calon Lan was premiered at a hymn-singing event by the choir of that organization, and he became the Poet Laureate of the Welsh Society shortly after then. Calon Lan has been followed by several more choral arrangements, chamber instrumental concert works, solo vocal songs, organ elaborations of hymns, and now this chamber opera which you will hear.

Although Christopher's Welsh ancestry is principally through his paternal grandmother and may not be genetically all that prevalent, his interest in Welsh folklore, music, and culture is substantial, although he finds the language daunting. His undergraduate training was principally at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he studied composition under Samuel Adler and David Liptak, and the organ under David Higgs, although he also holds a master's in composition from the Université de Montréal and a master's in organ performance from the University of Oregon in Eugene.

He devotes himself to church music, accompanying, poetry, composing, and cooking a variety of world cuisines.



JAMIE LYNN WEBSTER

(she/her)

Conductor and Director

Jamie Lynn Webster is an interdisciplinary performer and scholar (BA Vocal Performance and Music Education 1998, MA Folklore/Music 2003, PhD Musicology/Ethnomusicology

2009) working in varied spheres as a director/conductor, performer, and educator in Portland, Oregon (USA) and Adelaide, South Australia (AUS). Her published works explore intersections of music, movement, symbol, culture, and narrative on stage and screen, from European music and dance ensembles, to Balkan and American singing traditions, and the fantasy film music of Harry Potter. Much of Jamie's work has focused on the integration of music, dance, and folklore, and this integration is brought to the fore in the Curse on Dyved.

Jamie is the acting music director for ViVoce women's chorus in Portland and the Welsh Dragon Ensemble in Portland, both specialising in the fusion of choral music and storytelling. In Adelaide, she has coached a number of choirs on world repertoire, and her compositions have been sung by Lumina, the Corinthians, and local church ensembles.

As a solo and choral performer, Jamie has performed with the Chicago Choral Artists, and the Polish Lira Ensemble, and locally with the Adelaide Songwriters (Adelaide Fringe 2021, 2022), and in her own concert series, "Fierce Legacy - My Mother's Songs for the Journey" (Adelaide Fringe 2023), and "All the Birds of the Mountain" (Adelaide Fringe 2024). She enjoys sharing the stage with her children and her friends.



CHRISTOPHER BOND

(he/him)

Stage Director

Christopher Bond is an interdisciplinary artist, director and producer based in South Australia, whose work often focuses on digital arts and their intersection with live performance.



He is a graduate of NIDA's Master of Fine Arts Directing program.

Christopher has directed videos for youth arts organisations Cirkidz (Tackerz TV 2020 - 2021, Tackerz TV 2.0 2021) and D'Faces (The Book - Choose Your Terror 2021). He produces and performs in the podcast Role to Cast (2019 - current) which was nominated for Best Fiction at the 2021 Australian Podcast Awards and won the 2022 ENNIE award

Christopher is the former artistic director of Riverland Youth Theatre (Feb 2018 - Dec 2019) where he worked as director for projects such as Nunga Rhythms (2018, First Nations dance fusion), Listen Up Riverland! (2019, podcast written and performed by young people), Story City (2018, GPS choose your own adventure interactive activity), Postcards from the Riverland (2018, Outback Theatre for Young People & RYT joint devised show), and Peter Pan (2018).

Christopher directed, dramaturged, and sound designed Aphrodite and the Invisible Consumer Gods (2018), presented by Sam Donvito, which premiered in the Adelaide Fringe and won the Adelaide Festival Centre inSPACE Development Award. Christopher independently produced, wrote, and directed Worm (2020) for the Adelaide Fringe.

CORAL FREETH

(she/her)

Choreographer

Coral's journey in dance began at the age of 3, and it was Irish Dancing that captured her heart shortly thereafter.

Currently a Year 11 student at Cabra Dominican College, she dedicates most of her evenings to training at the Newry School of Irish Dancing alongside her lifelong friends. For Coral, dance is more than just movement—it's a way to express her deepest emotions.

Teaching dance for the past five years, Coral shares her passion and skills with others, nurturing the next generation of dancers. Her desire to shine on the grand stage fuels her commitment to excellence.

In this production, Coral takes on the role of choreographer for all of the major routines. At just 16 years old, she has already competed locally, nationally, and internationally, even gracing the world championships. Her versatility extends beyond Irish Dancing; she is an accomplished multi-genre dancer who has also performed in three other Fringe shows.



JAMIE MOFFATT

(they/them)

Manawydan, a
disinherited prince



Jamie studied at the Elder Conservatorium from 2007-2009, was a principal baritone of Co-Opera's national touring program from 2009-2017, and toured

internationally in 'The Marriage of Figaro', 'Acis and Galatea', and 'Die Fledermaus.' In 2023 they played Dr Dulcamara in The Elixir of Love.

In 2013 Jamie joined The Australian Voices, performing in the off-Broadway première of 'Boombox'; the national tour of the choral opera 'MOON' as one of six singers headlining the 'La Voix Du Sud' festival in New Caledonia in 2013 and premiering Natalie Weir's Everyday Requiem in 2018.

Jamie has been a member of the chorus of State Opera South Australia since 2010 and has performed the roles of Mad Hatter in 'Boojum!', II Commisionario in 'La Traviata', and Bob Beckett in 'HMS Pinafore.' They have regularly performed in the Adelaide Festival chorus since 2020, most recently in The Nightingale and Other Fables and in 2017 they founded Elephant in the Room Productions. In 2023 they helped found Classical Singer Sundays and currently serves as their inaugural chair.

Jamie also has conducted many community choirs, performed in self-produced cabaret shows, and has been commissioned many times as a composer for choirs and solo art song.

JORDAN NEWSHAM

(he/him)

Pryderi, prince of Dyved plus the dual role of Llwyd, a sorcerer dressed as a bishop

Jordan is a 3rd-year student in University of Adelaide Elder Conservatorium's Classical Voice degree with a passion for storytelling.



“Music and performance are, to me, a way to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions which can be difficult to express otherwise, in a way which transcends language barriers. I consider myself blessed to be receiving many opportunities to share my gift in ways which touch people's hearts, minds, and spirits.

Though coming from a background of musical theatre, this is my production in the world of classical singing, which I'm thrilled about.”

MICHELE DE COURCY

(she/her)

Rhiannon, queen of Dyved

Michele took her first degree in Music and French at the University of Queensland, later obtaining her AMusA in piano, and worked as a high school teacher of Music and French for ten years.



After completing her PhD on language immersion education she became a university lecturer, including many years as a Senior Lecturer in TESOL at a number of universities. On moving to South Australia in early 2010, she commenced the study of voice and obtained her Certificate of Performance in Singing in 2021. In Adelaide she sang with auditioned local choirs and as a semi-professional ensemble singer. Michele also loves performing art song and lute song repertoire.

Michele left full time university teaching in early 2015 in order to dedicate more time to the study and performance of music. She then spent six months of each of 2016 and 2017 studying voice in London and singing with several UK chamber choirs.

Since returning to Australia in late 2017, Michele has divided her time between Adelaide and Melbourne, singing in Melbourne at St Paul's Cathedral and as an auditioned member of the MSO Chorus. For the 2018 Adelaide Festival Fringe she formed her own eight voice women's ensemble, Sacred Hearts, to perform renaissance convent music. They have performed in several Fringe Festival concerts and church services.

In Adelaide, Michele has performed several times as an ensemble member with Elephant in the Room Productions. She is currently preparing the role of Queen Rhiannon in “The Curse on Dyved” for the 2024 Adelaide Fringe.

KATELYN CRAWFORD

(she/her)

Kicva, Pryderi's noble lady and princess

Katelyn Crawford is a mezzo soprano / soprano, classical guitarist and composer based in Adelaide. In 2022, she completed an Honours Degree of Bachelor of Music (Classical Voice) with first class honours at the Elder Conservatorium of Music under

the guidance of soprano Rosalind Martin. Katelyn also completed a Diploma in Languages (German Studies) with Advanced German at the University of Adelaide in 2021. Katelyn completed a Graduate Diploma in Music (Performance and Pedagogy) in 2023, and is commencing a PhD in classical voice performance and pedagogy in 2024.

During her classical voice studies, Katelyn has been awarded the Elder Conservatorium's Clement Q. Williams Prize (2020), The Frederick Bevan Prize for Singing (2021), The Rae Cocking Memorial Prize (2022), The Robert Whinham Prize (2022), The Lucy Josephine Baggott Prize (2023) and The George Boland Scholarship (2023). Katelyn received a Lunch Hour Award in the Recitals Australia Lunch Hour Series Autumn Season 2022, and participated in the Recitals Australia Elder Conservatorium Fellowship Program for 2023.

Katelyn performed the role of La Zelatrice in Puccini's opera *Suor Angelica* with Mopoke Theatre Productions in 2022, and was a member of the chorus in Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* in the Adelaide Festival in 2023. Katelyn also loves to perform art songs, and has performed her own recitals in the Recitals Australia Lunch Hour Autumn Series in 2022 and 2023 with collaborative pianist Sachiko Hidaka. In 2023, Katelyn also had the opportunity to perform with pianists Alexander Hanysz and Haowei Yang as part of the Recitals Australia Elder Conservatorium Fellowship Program.



THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS...

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Understudy and backstage manager: **Pippa Stolarski**
Historical dance choreography: **Michele de Courcy**
and **Jamie Lynn Webster**

Medieval Welsh historical advisor: **Kit Kappahn**
Celtic mask and weaponry designer: **Caitlin Bowe**
Mask and flower creation: **Jamie Webster**
Weapons creation: **Pippa Stolarski**
Costumes creation: **Michele de Courcy**
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Unley Uniting Church for use of rehearsal and performance space.





