

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Sleeping Beauty

By
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Sleeping Beauty was originally commissioned and produced by the Polka Theatre, Wimbledon, London in 1993.

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Character List:

- Branwen, the Bright Witch
- Modron, the Dark Witch
- Gryff
- King Peredur
- Queen Guinevere
- The Bishop
- Princess Briar Rose
- Prince Owain
- Tylwyth Teg 1
- Tylwyth Teg 2
- The Spider King

Note: The witches have their own spaces/areas in view throughout the entire play

Act One: Scene 1

The lights rise on the bright witch, BRANWEN, and the dark witch, MODRON. MODRON, who is dressed in dark green, sits spinning at a dark spinning wheel. BRANWEN, who is also dressed in green but a light gentle tone, sits at a harp. The sound of the harp represents her presence. MODRON also has an identifying sound, which is dark and foreboding. Both witches (who are not traditional witches, in regards to broomsticks etc, but supernatural women of the forest) sit at opposite sides of the stage in their own space from where, using their own magic, they can watch events elsewhere in the forest or castle. At the feet of BRANWEN sits GRYFF, a strange looking creature who is half-human, half-dragon.

BOTH: Once upon a time a long, long time ago

MODRON: In a land

BRANWEN: In a land

BOTH: So very far away.

BRANWEN: Once upon a time

MODRON: Twice upon a time

BRANWEN: and all the times together as ever I heard of but be sure it was a long time ago when the ploughs were pulled across the earth by strong horses, and water was drawn from the well.

MODRON: When the woods were full

BRANWEN: of Fairy Folk

MODRON: and Spider Kings

BRANWEN: and Witches bright

MODRON: and Witches dark who could fly in and out of moments

BRANWEN: and round the world in less time than it takes to say, good morning.

MODRON: In this time there was a castle with three towers

BRANWEN: Inside the castle lived a King...

The KING enters.

MODRON: and Queen. *(The QUEEN enters. They form a sad tableau.)* They were sad because they had no children.

BRANWEN: Every day they would go for a walk into the great forest.

MODRON: The great forest.

The lights change and the KING and QUEEN move into the forest. As they do so, MODRON'S sound fills the stage.

KING PEREDUR: Did you hear that noise? Sounded like thunder. Shall we go home Gwyn, dear?

QUEEN GUINEVERE: Don't call me "Gwyn dear". My name is Guinevere. Besides I'm not talking to you.

PEREDUR: You are.

GUINEVERE: I'm not.

PEREDUR: You just did.

GUINEVERE: This isn't talking, it's bickering.

PEREDUR: What's the matter now?

GUINEVERE: Nothing. I'm fine. I'm really very, very, very, very happy. Don't touch me. You are no happier than I, so don't pretend.

PEREDUR: Guinevere, the time has come for us to accept that we are not going to have children. It's our fate. We have to accept it.

GUINEVERE: Well I won't. I can't.

Exit Guinevere.

PEREDUR: Guinevere, don't walk ahead – please. The forest is no place to get lost, Guinevere? *(Silence)* Gwyn...? My Dear...? *(He exits)*

MODRON: ...deeper and deeper they walked into the great forest

BRANWEN: Where a baby lay sleeping. The most beautiful baby ever seen, waiting to be found by a King and Queen

A light shines down on the baby. We hear BRANWEN'S harp sound. GUINEVERE enters.

MODRON: It was the last day of Winter

BRANWEN: The first day of Spring.

GUINEVERE: Peredur?

PEREDUR: *(Off)* Gwyn dear.

GUINEVERE: I'm over here.

PEREDUR: *(Off)* Where's here?

GUINEVERE: By the oak tree.

PEREDUR: *(Off)* Which oak tree?

GUINEVERE: The wooden one – oh heavens above.

PEREDUR: *(Enters)* Guinevere?

GUINEVERE: *(Off)* Perry – Peredur.

PEREDUR: I'm over here.

GUINEVERE: *(Off)* Where's here?

PEREDUR: By the oak tree.

GUINEVERE: *(Off)* Which oak tree?

PEREDUR: Oh Lord. *(Exits)*

GRYFF has been watching all this in a magic mirror, which he now puts down.

GRYFF: That's odd. I thought they were meant to find the baby.

BRANWEN: *(Opens her eyes)* You mean they haven't? *(grabs the mirror)*

What's the matter with them? Couldn't they see the light? I purposely put a light on the child. *(She sits back exhausted)*

GRYFF: You've overdone it again. Tired yourself out getting spells wrong.

BRANWEN: I'll just close my eyes. Gather my powers.

GRYFF: Aye, have a sleep why don't you. I sometimes wonder what it would be like working for someone who can actually get a spell right. *(She opens her eyes and stares at him)* But who am I – a servant – nothing more.

BRANWEN: Just keep an eye on the magic mirror. I'll try to steer the King and Queen in the right direction.

We hear her music again and the light on the baby becomes stronger.

BRANWEN: What's happening?

GRYFF: Nothing, the baby is sleeping beneath the rose bush, as before. The Royal couple... *(Enter KING & QUEEN.)* Have found each other ... *(Exit KING & QUEEN)* No they haven't.

BRANWEN: The child! The child?

GRYFF: I told you. Asleep. And your magic light is - *(The light goes off)*... is off!

BRANWEN: Off!

GRYFF: Branwen, there's a shadow in the forest moving towards the baby.

BRANWEN grabs the mirror and glares at it for a moment, as she does so we see MODRON enter the forest.

MODRON: Well, well, what have we here?

BRANWEN: My sister. Come there's no time to lose.

GRYFF: I'm gone. I'm gone.

Exit GRYFF and BRANWEN, MODRON approaches the baby.

MODRON: Little child, so innocent, so helpless. I was once just like you- *(She tickles the child under the chin)* Oh little child - an idea

occurs to me. A bright, bouncing bold idea. You can come with me. Aye – I'll bring you up as if you were my own. I will teach you everything I know and I know so much, so much. - My little sleeping ...

BRANWEN approaches.

BRANWEN: Don't touch her.

MODRON: Sister. What kept you?

BRANWEN: The child is in my care.

MODRON: Then you're careless indeed to leave her alone in the forest where I found her.

BRANWEN: I found her first. She was abandoned by a poor forest girl who was sick and couldn't feed her. Now she is my gift to the King and Queen. You cannot interfere.

MODRON: Cannot?

BRANWEN: My light was upon her.

MODRON: Not when I found her, therefore I claim her as my own.

BRANWEN: You? What use would you have for a child? *(This enrages MODRON)*

MODRON: I? I will bring up the child as if she were my own.

BRANWEN: Oh Modron, whatever goodness there is left in you I call upon it now. Let the baby be seen by the King and Queen. They've waited so long for a child and suffered so much. Let them be happy. Let the child be happy. *(Pause)*

MODRON: If I were to give up my claim, what would you give me in return?

BRANWEN: In return? *(Sees GYFF)* You may have my servant.

GRYFF: What?

BRANWEN: She gets her spells right, isn't that what you wanted?

GRYFF: But I –

BRANWEN: Sssh!

MODRON: What kind of creature is that?

BRANWEN: Half dragon, half man.

MODRON: Any idea which half is which?

GRYFF: Very funny.

BRANWEN: Shhh. It was a spell which . . . went a little wrong.

MODRON: Can he fly?

BRANWEN: Um - not yet

MODRON: Can he spit fire?

BRANWEN: No actually he can't

MODRON: Can he do anything?

BRANWEN: He's got a very thick skin.

GRYFF: Just as well.

BRANWEN: And he's excellent fun and very loyal.

MODRON: So is a boomerang. I don't want him. He's hideous. I want the child.

BRANWEN: You can 't have her.

GRYFF: The King and Queen approach!

MODRON: If I can't have the child, they shall not have the child.

BRANWEN: But why Modron? Why?

MODRON: Because you provoke me. The child is invisible.

She makes her spell and the women retreat. Enter the KING and QUEEN.

PEREDUR: I told you not to walk ahead. We're lost, totally lost.

GUINEVERE: Sssh. What sound was that?

PEREDUR: What?

GUINEVERE: I heard something from the trees.
PEREDUR: It's just the wind in the leaves.
GUINEVERE: No.
PEREDUR: Come - we should turn to the castle. The forest is full of strange creatures.
GUINEVERE: I thought I heard a cry. It sounded like - like a baby crying.
PEREDUR: This is not funny Guinevere.
GUINEVERE: But I heard it.
PEREDUR: It's the forest. It knows our deep desire and plays tricks upon us. Come let's go.
GUINEVERE: It came from over there I think.
PEREDUR: Guinevere. Come back.

The QUEEN searches.

BRANWEN: NOW WITH ALL THE POWERS AT MY COMMAND
I OVERTURN MY SISTER'S HAND.
COME LIGHT, COME SHINE
SEE THE CHILD, SEE THE CHILD

Suddenly a ray of light shines down.

GUINEVERE: Look, look.
PEREDUR: Stay back. Stay back.
GUINEVERE: No. It's a baby - a little baby.
PEREDUR: It can't be. It can't be.
GUINEVERE: But it is. See.
MODRON: You shall not see! You shall not see!

MODRON raises her hand and the light goes off

PEREDUR: It's gone. We must leave this place Guinevere.
GUINEVERE: Gone?