

Celtic Myth with Sounds

What is the role of music in theater production or in the movie? It supports the plot and leads us emotionally through the story. It also tells the story on its own. Imagine watching a horror movie without a sound - no background music when you step into the dark room, no scream when the knife blade cuts through your flesh. Without a sound, theater or cinematography loses its emotional leverage because it is in our genome to interpret the sound.

The production of *The Children of Lir* is a show presented by the inseparable duet of music and storytelling. Two elements act as one in this Celtic myth. The actor (Gail Nyoka) tells us a story using narration from the third person perspective and transforming into the characters once we are in the story. Music by Meta Epstein on Celtic harp underscores and outlines that story, supporting it and contradicting it at a time. It uses traditional musical elements of opera or movie scoring as a motif and tonal organization, and dynamics to support the story told by the actor.

The story itself is typical for mythology, with elements including magic and jealousy, love and betrayal. It is about the children who were turned into the swans by their jealous stepmother. They remained as swans for the duration of the spell (900 years) until they were turned back into humans. Once they became humans again they made a choice to die because everyone they knew and loved had already passed away, and there was no reason for them to live anymore.

The intimate setting of the Parnell's lounge allowed the audience to share the experience rather than just tag along. The performers' duet used all the theatrical elements to support and share their incredible journey through the Celtic mythology. There were no lighting effects but performers used the resources they had by playing with light and shadow. There was no set or props, but the performers used musical elements and body language to paint the scene in front of our eyes. As it often happens with mythology, the plot was overwhelmed with names and places but clear delivery and meticulous choices in acting, as well as occasional eye contact to break the "fourth wall," made it easy to follow. Everyone was included in this journey, no one was left behind.

The show felt improvisational but well-thought out. In general, the storytelling was more restricted by the script, but allowed the interpretation and intention; the music, on the contrary, came and went as it pleased. The incredible connection between the two performers allowed them to be spontaneous and go with whatever emotion the story evoked rather than "follow the script." And I loved every moment of that!

Tales and myths are a huge part of every culture. Those stories serve as a bridge between the old generation and the younger generations by helping to share the experience and wisdom. *The Children of Lir* is a Celtic myth delivered to us by amazing performers – Gail Nyoka and Meta Epstein – bringing that fascinating wisdom to us through magnificent acting and outstanding musicality. Even if you think that you know the mythology, you do not want to miss this unbelievable experience within the BorderLight Festival in Cleveland.

Review by Valeriya Nedviga
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