



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE



THE BANSHEE

A Chamber Opera in One Act

DANIEL DALY

Composer and librettist

Alison Kaufman, Soprano

Sarah Brauer, Mezzo-Soprano

Dylan Bunten, Baritone

Olivia Oxholm, Dancer

Conducted by

Andrés Rodríguez

Aasen-Hull Hall

Saturday, May 13 | 3:00 p.m.



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In Irish legend, the banshee is a ghostly woman whose wail is a warning to those who hear it that they may soon die. This opera is a speculation on the origin of this character, and it tells the story of a witch, who, in an attempt to gain enough power to give speech to her mute daughter, summons a man to her forest so that she that she may slay him in ritual sacrifice. The witch's sister interrupts this plan by stealing the daughter away from her mother and warning the man. When the witch witnesses the unraveling of her influence – her daughter's intimacy with her sister, and her sister's growing affection for the man – she engages in a decisive scheme to put the forest forever under her rule, no matter the cost to her family. When this scheme plays out, with an unexpected result, the witch transforms into *THE BANSHEE*.

This performance is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music in Composition. Daniel Daly is a student of Robert Kyr and David Crumb.

If you are interested in making a donation to recoup some the expenses of this performance, please visit the following page: <https://www.gofundme.com/my-new-opera>. Thank you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JENNA (soprano): A young woman (25) who lives in the forest with her sister,

ZEELAH: (mezzo-soprano): A witch (33).

SAM (baritone): A young man from a nearby village (31).

MAIA: (dancer): The witch's mute daughter (15).

SCENE 1

- I. *"I am ready"*
- II. *"Somewhere in those woods"*
- III. *"Maia"*
- IV. *"Come to me"*
- V. *"You will ruin my magic"*
- VI. *"Be silent"*

SCENE 2

- VII. *"Do you remember?"*
- VIII. *"A witch nearby"*
- IX. *"Last night"*
- X. *"Jenna"*
- XI. *"Whatever comes"*

SCENE 3

- XII. *"Where is he?"*
- XIII. *"Again and again"*
- XIV. *"Dark Queen"*
- XV. *"A cold wind"*
- XVI. *"I am not afraid"*

PRINCIPALS

Alison Kaufman	JENNA (soprano)
Sarah Brauer	ZEELAH (mezzo-soprano)
Dylan Bunten	SAM (baritone)
Olivia Oxholm	MAIA (dancer)

ORCHESTRA

Alexis Evers	Flute
Kathryn von Bernthal	Soprano Saxophone
Chelsea Oden	Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
Daniel Yim	Bassoon

Andrea Kennard	Horn
Joseph Vranas	Trumpet
Kellyn Haley	Trombone

Crystal Chu	Percussion
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Melanie Haskins	Violin 1
Michael Fleming	
Megan Hermansen	Violin 2
Izabel Austin	
Lauren Culver	Viola
Samuel Kalcheim	
Jo Eggleston	Violoncello
Nicole Long	
Aaron Green	Contrabass

Andrés Rodriguez	Conductor
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COACHES

Andrew Pham	Rehearsal Pianist
Robert Kyr	Mentor

Remember what Jenna said!
The curse that touches you
will change!
It will change into a blessing!
Oh Maia, you have power!
From your mother to you!
You are healing the forest!
Making it new!

Maia, go to Jenna.
You can heal her!

MAIA [*shouts*]
Jenna! I am with you! You
were right! Jenna...I am
stronger! Stronger than any
curse! Come back! Wake up!
Jenna, come back!

[*JENNA awakes.*]

SAM
Jenna!

JENNA
Sam! You are with me!

SAM
Oh Jenna,
My love!

JENNA
Maia, your voice...
I thought I heard an angel!
Oh Maia...

SAM/JENNA
Today, in these woods,
Something is changing.

[*MAIA leaves the embrace of
SAM and JENNA. She stands
with her eyes to the heavens
and allows herself to smile.
Birds and beasts cluster
around her. The opera ends.*]

~finis~

ZEELAH SAM
Come to me. Dark Queen
Worship me. of the forest!
Bow to me. Goddess of
Bow before the night!
the Goddess!

ZEELAH
And now,
With all my power,
I command you:
Speak my name!
My holy name!
Lift your voice and cry out!

[ZEELAH touches MAIA and imparts a blast of power. MAIA screams and collapses on JENNA's body, where she continues to scream and weep.]

ZEELAH *[spoken]*
Maia?

MAIA *[sobbing over JENNA]*
Come back...I need you...

ZEELAH *[spoken]*
But I'm here, Maia. Your mother. I have done everything for you.

MAIA *[spoken]*
You only curse! That's why I was silent...You cursed me...I was crying on your lap...You shrieked at me: *Be silent! Not another sound from you!*

I obeyed...Jenna knew...Jenna danced with me...

XV. "A cold wind"

[ZEELAH wails in grief.]

A cold wind.
An empty forest.
Look, the leaves!
Already falling.

A grey hand,
Scabbed and cracked.
Wet blood under my nails!

Everything I touch is dying!
My daughter is crying!

Maia...

[ZEELAH slowly exits.]

XVI. "I am not afraid"

[A single swallow darts by. Soon it is followed by another and another.]

SAM
She is gone;
I am not afraid anymore.
Look at the sky!
Hundreds of swallows,
Flying for you!

[MAIA rises, gazing at the birds. They gather around her, flying fast and thick.]

LIBRETTO

SCENE 1

I. "I am ready"

[Night. An ancient stone chamber, deep in the forest. ZEELAH addresses an unseen presence].

ZEELAH
I am ready.
Every spell has failed me.
The stones of my house
Are stained with blood.
All beasts have fled the forest:
Afraid of my knife.
Not even the crows follow me,
Not anymore.
They are afraid.

[ZEELAH stands at a table and flings its contents to the ground. She looks around her lair and sees something that reminds her of her failure – a bottle or totem. She crosses to it and destroys it. Next she clutches her spell book and attempts to tear it. She fails, and sinks to the ground.]

I have no power left.
My daughter stays silent,
Always silent,
Not a word for her mother!
Whom do I thank
For a mute daughter?

Born to me,
The strongest of the strong.

[ZEELAH rises, protesting.]

I am strong!

You are right:
Beasts are weak,
Their deaths are meaningless.
Give me a man!
Drive him into my forest!
Let me possess his will!
When I have him,
I will spill his blood!
No power without blood!
I am ready!

[ZEELAH contemplates the plan. She goes to fetch MAIA to the grove.]

II. "Somewhere in those woods"

[The same night. A bedroom. SAM twists under the sheets. He sits up against the headboard. He casts off the bedclothes and gets up. He drifts toward the window overlooking the forest.]

SAM
Somewhere in those woods,
You're out there,
Naked,

Pinned against a tree.
Wolves are circling.
So frightened, so cold.
Trembling, all alone.
I will find you!
I will crush the wolves!
And then,
I will hold you.
And then...

[SAM stands still, wearing a strange grin. Abruptly, he starts to leave; he laces his boots, dons his coat. He allows himself one more gaze out the window. His face changes from rapture to horror, and he looks down at his coat and boots. He backs away from the window and sits on his bed.]

No! She's not like that!
She is pure, as a child.

[SAM removes his boots and coat. He curls in bed, weeping.]

III. "Maia"

[In the forest, JENNA searches for MAIA and ZEELAH.]

JENNA
Maia!
Come to me,
Oh Maia!

[In a grove surrounded by sputtering torches, ZEELAH

stands, arms upraised. MAIA shivers at her side.]

IV. "Come to me"

ZEELAH
Come to me,
Run to me,
To the grove of ancient oaks.
Cross the water,
Climb the stones.
In the deepest shadow,
In the darkest night,
Seek the glow of the ritual torch,
And come to me.

[Rapt, SAM rises from his bed and crosses to the window.]

SAM
Somewhere in those woods,
I will find you:
Naked, all alone.

ZEELAH
Your blood flows hot,
Your loins are burning.
Your beloved is waiting.

[JENNA appears in the forest, searching for MAIA.]

JENNA
Maia!

SAM
Somewhere in those woods!
I will find you!

JENNA
Today, something is different.
Today, something will change.

ZEELAH
Stop! I command you!
Be silent!

JENNA	ZEELAH
Today,	No!
something	Be silent!
is different.	Stop your
Today,	whining and
something	listen to me!
will change.	Tell me:
	Where are
	You hiding
	him?
	Tell me now!

XIII. "Again and again"

ZEELAH
Again and again,
You oppose me!
Again and again,
You cross and double-cross me!
I give and I give:
Everything I have
to make a home for us!
But your only answer,
Again and again,
is betrayal!
Never again
Will you betray me!

JENNA
No...

Zeelah...
Sister!

[ZEELAH seizes JENNA's throat. ZEELAH and JENNA struggle. JENNA dies.]

ZEELAH
Behold my power!
Know me for who I am!
Strongest of all!
Most powerful of the most powerful!

Come to me.
Worship me.
Speak my name,
My holy name!

[SAM, again spellbound, enters with MAIA, and forces her nearer ZEELAH. MAIA struggles against him.]

XIV. "Dark Queen"

SAM
Dark Queen of the Forest!
Goddess of the Night!

ZEELAH
Come to me.
Worship me.
Speak my name.

SAM
Dark Queen of the Forest!
Goddess of the Night!

ZEELAH *[off]*
Jenna!

SAM
That voice—
Ringing in my head!

JENNA
Go! You must go!

Maia, lead him.
Go to the edge of the forest!
Do this for me.

[MAIA runs to JENNA.]

XI. “Whatever comes”

JENNA
Oh Maia,
Whatever comes,
Keep dancing.
Keep rejoicing
Let nothing steal your joy.

ZEELAH *[off]*
Jenna!

SAM
Help me...

JENNA
Oh Maia,
Whatever comes,
Keep hoping.
Keep believing
That today will be different.
Today, something will change!

Oh Maia,
Whatever comes,
Remember, I am with you.
You are stronger than every
evil!
Stronger than any curse!

Oh Maia,
Whatever comes,
Whatever curse may touch
you,
It will change.
It will become a blessing.
Go!

[MAIA leads SAM away.]

SCENE 3

XII. “Where is he?”

[ZEELAH enters in a fury.]

ZEELAH
Where is he?
Where is the man?
I heard voices ringing in the
forest!
What are you plotting?
Tell me now!

JENNA
Today, something is different.
Today, something will change.

ZEELAH
Stop your whining!
Listen to me now!
Where are you hiding him?

ZEELAH
Come to the grove!
Run to the torch!
Bare your flesh for the
sacrifice!

*[JENNA sees MAIA and shouts
her name. JENNA and MAIA
run together and embrace.]*

V. “You will ruin my magic”

ZEELAH
No! You will ruin my magic!
You will wreck everything!

JENNA
Zeelah! Your daughter is
shaking with terror.
Will you shed blood before
her eyes?

ZEELAH
I will heal her!
She will speak to me!

JENNA
She will run from you.
No miracle is worth this cost!
Be loving, and she will cling to
you.

VI. “Be silent”

ZEELAH
Be silent.
Take your hands away from
my daughter.

Get out of my sight.
Do not follow me.

JENNA
Zeelah, please...

ZEELAH JENNA
Enough! Zeelah, be
Get out before loving!
I strike you! No!
Not another You will
Give me my hurt her!
child and go! Zeelah!

*[ZEELAH grips MAIA's hand
and starts to lead her away.
JENNA takes hold of MAIA's
other hand and stops her.
ZEELAH jerks MAIA's arm
once, twice...At ZEELAH's last
jerk, MAIA and JENNA fall to
the ground. Suddenly
distracted, ZEELAH turns in
circles, as though searching.]*

ZEELAH
Lost...
I have lost him.
I cannot see him.
He is gone.
My spell is broken.

You have set him free.
Get out of my sight!

*[ZEELAH screams in
frustration, and collapses to
her knees. JENNA whispers,
“Come, Maia.” JENNA and*

MAIA exit. ZEELAH is alone with a dark presence.]

SCENE 2

VII. "Do you remember?"

[Dawn in the desolate forest. MAIA is curled in a ball on the ground. JENNA holds her.]

JENNA
Do you remember
When these woods were full
of songbirds,
A chorus in every tree?

Do you remember
Waking to their song,
Watching the dawning sky
With dew in your eyelashes?

Do you remember
The fox, and the little bear,
Following you to the stream,
Nuzzling your hands?
Oh, Maia,
Remember these things.
Remember, and believe:
The woods will be full again.
There will be singing at dawn
again.
Do you remember?
Do you believe?

[MAIA dances, progressing from cringing and despair to rejoicing. SAM, drawn by the dance the singing, appears. He

is dazed, confused, lost. MAIA sees SAM and flees to JENNA.]

SAM
Please,
Don't be afraid.
I won't touch you.
I just wanted to see you...

[SAM retreats from the pair.]

VIII. "A witch nearby"

JENNA
Wait, there is a witch nearby.
She has cursed you.
You must leave these woods.

SAM
I am not afraid of witches...
I am afraid of myself.

JENNA
No, you don't understand;
She did this to do.
She made you come here.

[JENNA goes to SAM.]

SAM
Stay away from me!

JENNA
It was a dream!
You had an evil dream.
Only a dream.

SAM
A dream.

No. 9 "Last Night"

SAM
Last night,
A dream of you
Possessed my mind,
But I am always dreaming of
you.

Last night,
I searched for you
Until thorns cut my hands,
And my whole body ached,
But I am always aching for
you.

I *know* you.
I saw you,
Long ago,
Not far from here:
A young woman,
Gazing into the sunrise,
Serene.

But here you are
In the forest where I saw you.
Here you stand
Before me now:
Not a vision,
Not a dream,
But a woman—
Alive, breathing, beautiful.
Even more beautiful than I
remember
Or could imagine!

JENNA
You saw me,
You remembered me—

SAM JENNA
And all of my Thought of
life, I thought me,
of you, Searched for
Searched for me,
You, Desired me.
Desired you. Desired me.

JENNA
Desired and remembered me.

[JENNA and SAM stand very close, facing each other. Will they embrace?]

X. "Jenna!"

ZEELAH [off]
Jenna!

JENNA
You must go!
She will kill you if you stay.

SAM
Then come with me,
Come to where it is safe!

JENNA
I cannot go with you.
She always knows where I
am.
She will find you through me!

Go now.
You can escape!
I will stay and distract my
sister!