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I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls

A Play

Ade Morris

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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I DREAMT I DWELT IN MARBLE HALLS

First produced at The Watermill Theatre, Newbury in March 2002 with the following cast of characters:

The Man/George	Shaun Hennesey
Madelyn/Maddy	Ann Marcusson
Daniel/Liam	Matthew Morrison

Directed by Ade Morris
Designed by Libby Watson
Lighting designed by Lawrence T. Doyle

It was revived by The Watermill Theatre, Newbury in March 2006 with the following cast of characters:

The Man/George	Shaun Hennesey
Madelyn/Maddy	Katarina Olsson
Daniel/Liam	Justin McCarron

Directed by Ade Morris
Designed by Libby Watson
Lighting designed by Lawrence T. Doyle

CHARACTERS

Madelyn Ingram, a great beauty; mid twenties
"Mad" Maddy, an older Madelyn
Liam Ingram, her brother; early twenties
George Park, a young police constable
Young Daniel, as a boy, aged from eight to eighteen
Daniel McKennan, a visitor; mid thirties
The Man, a stranger; mid seventies

The action takes place in a rural croft, a hoolie barn on the banks of Lough Erne and a police barracks near Enniskillen, Northern Ireland

Time—Spring 1935, Autumn 1938, Summers 1955-1965, and Autumn 1985

Please note that groups performing this play must display in all announcements, publicity material and programmes the author's name, Ade Morris, and indicate that the work is based on a short story by Bryan Gallagher.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Casting

The four characters, at different periods in their lives, may be played by two men and one woman as in the original production where one actor played young and older Daniel, and Liam, another played George and The Man and one played Maddy and Madelyn. Or, if preferred, seven actors may be used to play old and young Madelyn, George, The Man, old and young Daniel, and Liam.

Set

The play is set in a small croft on a soaking hillside near the Northern Irish border with the South in Fermanagh. The croft is small, abstracted and bare, and should have a down-at-heel appearance tempered by faded gentility. On the back wall is an old harmonium, covered by a dust cloth, beneath which is a lace runner. A piano stool stands in front. Above the harmonium is a shelf with music books, and a farm ledger of accounts. Above the shelf is a plain crucifix. In the back wall L of the harmonium is a door leading to a bedroom and pantry on the same floor (there may be steps leading to a loft bedroom also if required). R of the harmonium on the back wall is a Belfast sink with a single tap above and a water jug in the sink. R of this, on the R wall, is a set of shelves with pots, pans, plates, cups, etc., as well as Madelyn's writing box. Above, or through these shelves, streams light as from a window looking out on a small farmyard. DR of these shelves is the main entrance into the croft, with a small inner porch and a step into the yard on which characters can stand or sit. Neither of the two doorways in the original production actually had doors fitted, though this is optional. The yard beyond may be implied by lighting on or around the croft step, giving the the croft an isolated and timeless presence: an island in the dark. DR of the yard door is an old wooden dining chair with a tatty, but once fine, seat cover. In front of this chair, R in the fourth wall is an implied window with light again streaming through, this time from the lane. Another matching chair stands L, just below the bedroom door. On the wall UL are hooks for clothes and an old mirror at head height. DL is a smoking stove with chimney stretching up through an implied roof. By this stove is a pile of peat or logs, a poker, and a dustpan and brush. C stands a small traditional cottage table on which is a key.

Time Sequence

Scenes involving Daniel and the Man are set in Autumn 1985. Those between Madelyn, George and Liam are mainly set in Spring 1935, with the exception of the final scene between Liam and Madelyn which is Autumn 1938. Those scenes between the young Daniel and the older Maddy are set between the summers of 1955-1965.

The play was originally staged with no scene breaks. The passing of time was implied by lights, music and subtle costume changes. The idea was to suggest how the past can live in the present, the force of memory dictate our present lives.

Music

Music, unless otherwise indicated, is used to build bridges between, and to underscore, particular scenes or moments. The following is a list of recorded and live music sources as used in the original and subsequent Watermill productions of *I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls* and is intended as a guide to mood and atmosphere. Specific songs may or may not be adhered to, the final choice being the prerogative of the director. Alternatively, recorded tracks used could be played live, or musicians engaged to re-record music where appropriate.

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Act I

I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls

Taken from the intro to "I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls" from the opera *The Bohemian Girl* by M.W. Balfe. Played by James Galway on the recording *Celtic Minstrel* (RCA Victor LC 0316).

She Moved Through the Fair
Taken from the intro to "She Moved Through the Fair". Played by James Galway on the recording *Celtic Minstrel* (RCA Victor LC 0316).

I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls
Live harmonium rendition of the tune taken from the score of *The Bohemian Girl* by M.W. Balfe. Also sung with lyrics from the original aria.

Garden Where the Praties Grow
Live guitar rendition of the traditional tune to "Garden Where the Praties Grow".

Kitty's Rambles
Taken from the recording *The Irish Music Anthology: The Gold Collection. 40 Classic Songs, Jigs and Reels.* Frank Lees Tara Cleilidh Band (Proper/Retro R2CD 40 107/1)

Finnea Lassies
Taken from the recording *The Irish Music Anthology: The Gold Collection. 40 Classic Songs, Jigs and Reels.* Hugh Gillespie (Proper/ Retro R2CD 40 107/1).

When the Saints Go Marching In
American Gospel/Jazz.

King Billy's March
Craigavon Protestant Boys. Taken from the recording *Auld Orange Flute Bands* (Black Mountain Music Production BMM 0399).

Act II

Garden Where the Praties Grow
Traditional. John MacCormack's vocal recording taken from *John McCormack — 18 Favourites.*

Carrickfergus
Traditional. Live harmonium rendition.

Irish Mist
By Boolavogue. Taken from the recording *Celtic Spirit* (Music Club MCCD 234).

ACT I

A room in a rural croft near Enniskillen, Northen Ireland. Autumn 1985

The room is tidy but shabby: a recent coat of whitewash has tried to cover damp and dirt. There is a kitchen table C, *on which is the key to a clock. There are two wooden dining chairs with once expensive, now faded seat covers, by the side walls* L *and* R, *and a milking stool — all as if waiting to be occupied by guests. There is a door into the bedroom and pantry at the back wall* L, *and a door* R *with a porch and a step which leads to the yard. Upstage from this is a shelf area. In the back wall* R *is a Belfast sink with a single tap.* DL *is a cold hearth and pot stove and a window in the fourth wall* DR *overlooking the lane. Also on the fourth wall, approximately* C *hangs an invisible clock, the ticking of which can be heard throughout. There is a mirror* UL *and some clothes hooks with a man's cap on one hook. Against the back wall next to the sink, and underneath a dust cover, there is an old portable pedal harmonium, with a lace runner, and a piano stool. Above it is a shelf with a book of music and a ledger of farm accounts. There are various pots, pans and crockery, the paraphernalia of life in a croft, but the room is dead*

Music: "I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls"

Daniel McKennan enters the farmyard. A man in his mid to late thirties, trim and fashionable, but clearly dressed for a funeral. His coat is particularly fine, tailored. He carries a bunch of three white roses and a guitar in a battered old guitar case. He pauses, then approaches the door. He peers tentatively in. The music fades

Daniel Is there anyone there?

No reply. Silence, he enters the room

Is there a soul in the house?

No reply. The clock in the fourth wall strikes twelve noon. He moves slowly into the room. He leans the guitar against the table, puts the roses on the table and looks around. He checks to make sure that no-one is around again, then he goes to the harmonium, uncovers it partially, and opens it. He looks around again

Well it can't hurt now ...

He tentatively makes to play a note, his back to the audience. He is pleased with the sound and experiments more, gradually he picks out the tune of "The Town I Loved So Well" and plays it tentatively at first, but with growing confidence

As he plays, The Man appears at the bedroom door. An old man, mid-seventies, tall, dressed darkly. A figure rooted in the past, he watches, unsmiling. He has an official bearing

The Man (*eventually interrupting*) Will you wake her inside?

Daniel abruptly stops playing, shocked

Daniel Oh Jesus I'm sorry, I thought I was the first.
The Man You are, apart from herself, and the all-seein' Lord. (*He sees the guitar*) What the feck is that?
Daniel It's a guitar ... I thought I might pl ... She's ... Miss Ingram's ...?
The Man (*indicating the bedroom*) Where else?

Silence. The Man comes closer

You play well. For a London man. You must be Daniel McKennan?
Daniel That I am, I am, yes ... (*He holds out his hand*) I always wondered how it sounded ...

The Man takes his hand

The Man I called at Morgan's, they said you'd be coming — over the water …
Daniel What time will it be? The burial. I don't know.
The Man Half after six, she's to be carried to the priest. (*He sees the flowers*) Are they for her?
Daniel They are, they are yes ... (*An awkward moment*) ... I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name ...?
The Man They're a fine spray.
Daniel They are, for Mad ... for Miss Ingram.
The Man Could you find no red roses, man?
Daniel I remember she likes roses. I brought white, for the time ——
The Man (*speaking over Daniel*) I've seen no vase, I'll put them with her.

The Man goes back in the bedroom

Daniel (*under his breath*) Jesus ...

The Man appears in the doorway

The Man Will you take a look?
Daniel I will ... in a minute.
The Man It's a steady gaze she has. (*He comes back into the room*) How long since you saw the old lady?
Daniel Twenty years.
The Man So. You're Sally McKennan's boy, I remember your mother from Jackson's bar ...
Daniel Oh aye ...
The Man And you all London-Irish now and a big man in music over the water?
Daniel I wouldn't say that. I make my way, it's just different. How did you know her?
The Man Your mother? Or Madelyn Ingram?
Daniel Both, I suppose.
The Man Neighbours. Neighbours. I've not been back in Fermanagh long. Been away.

Silence

Daniel She reached a good age. We can say that.
The Man Can we?

Silence

Daniel She seemed old, Miss Ingram, even when I first met her.
The Man Miss Ingram?
Daniel It was Miss Ingram ...?
The Man Madelyn. That was the name I knew her by ...

Daniel is by the table. Pause, music plays very softly: "She Moved Through The Fair"

Daniel I remember ... there were chickens on this table, roosting there ...
The Man What were you doing here?
Daniel I'd come for her buttermilk, with fourpence for a can of buttermilk.

Pause

The Man It seems like she struggled.
Daniel The house was falling in then, she had no money at all.
The Man I'm sorry to hear her trouble.

Silence, except the music becomes more present. Daniel smiles to himself, a particular memory

Daniel But she was strong.
The Man She was?
Daniel She was ... I mean in herself ...
The Man Tell me ... tell me what she was like when you knew her, we've a time to pass.

Pause. Daniel meets his gaze

Come, we've a duty, 'tis a wake ...
Daniel All right. (*He takes off his coat, then, as if to the house*) Is there a soul in the house?

The music continues

The scene changes, becoming warmer, lighter, a different season and another time. Summer 1955. The room is still poor and bare, but suddenly homely

The voice of "Mad" Maddy, the older Madelyn, is heard

Maddy (*off, from the bedroom*) Is that Danny McKennan creeping on my stone?

The Young Daniel is there. He has a goose egg, wrapped in straw in a can

If older Daniel is playing his younger self then a brighter, less care-worn voice, but no attempt to actually be the boy, this is a memory

Young Daniel It is, Miss, I've come for the buttermilk, Miss.

Maddy emerges from the bedroom carrying three red roses in a vase. She puts them on the table, then she goes to the range to rattle the coals under a steaming kettle

The Man remains in the scene but is gradually placed in the distant future as the room comes alive

Daniel (*to The Man*) My mother sent me for buttermilk — once a week. I'd never seen the like of her, hair sticking out from under her hat, a man's old hat I tell you, and like a scarecrow she was ...

Maddy Will you stand there talkin' to the wall, boy, or come over for a warm? If I'd known you'd be early I'd be dressed, and be in my finery to receive you like a lady, but as it is you catch me in my poor housecoat.

Daniel .... and she had on a bag of an apron that buried what little there was of her ...

The music fades

Maddy And with nothing but a wild rose or two to brighten the place. So, give me your can.

Young Daniel Mother says to give you this, it's a goose egg, fresh laid.

Maddy Goose? (*She takes the egg*) There's a thing. I've not seen a goose's egg these eight years, not since — Marco, that met that vicious hound of Jackson's and fought him to the death.

Young Daniel Marco?

Maddy That's Marco, my old goose. Shall I tell you a story about her, boy?

Young Daniel Her? I thought you said he was called Marco; that's a man's name.

Maddy Her, that's right, and we never knew it till Marco sat for a whole week and laid an enormous egg. 'Twas like a Vatican miracle. And she was the bravest goose you ever saw, proud like a queen, or a king since she was confused on that matter, and strong like a gander, and when that hound came yelping in the yard she took him for a scoundrel and attacked him with not a thought to her fine feathers and he a big brown hunting beast that killed a hundred hare well before he set a sight upon her ... and the goose Marco just wanting to drive him away and away.

A silence, she sighs at the memory

Young Daniel You must have been terrible sad to find him, her, dead.

Maddy Marco? No! 'Twas the dog I found dead! It's neck broken like a kindlin' stick! She had a mighty wing on her, that bird — for an egg-layin' will-jill goose.

Young Daniel Will-jill?

Maddy Half William and half Jillian, a terrible confused kind of a goose.

Young Daniel What happened with her?

Maddy Jackson wanted her shot, said he'd come round with his gun and do it himself, said she was a danger to all the creatures of the earth, but I shooed him off as well ... 'Twas then about the time my brother died, and Jackson and my brother, they'd crossed each other before. But that goose was a nastier hound than his for any beggin' tinkers that peeped in the gate. (*Shouting*) Honk honk!

Music plays very softly: "She Moved Through The Fair"

Young Daniel How did she die?
Maddy Oh, it was the old age killed Marco, and that was the last goose egg I tasted the day she died ... Mind I ate Marco — God bless her, ate her entirely ... and tough as old boots she was ... I'll put this safe away.

The clock strikes one

Will you wind the clock, Daniel? (*She indicates the key on the table*)

Maddy takes the egg to the pantry

Music fades

Daniel becomes/is replaced by his older self and puts the key on the shelf above the harmonium. The Man returns. The room grows cold again. Autumn 1985. They wait in silence awhile

Daniel She told me that several times, it was a favourite.
The Man Is it true, do you think?
Daniel Why should she lie?
The Man Aye, or anyone ... (*He looks through the door, down the hill*) I can't think we'll be the only mourners.
Daniel No.
The Man And you with no lick of a drink about ye? ... To keep the spirits flowing ... Did you bring a drop?
Daniel Drink?... No I didn't think ...
The Man London Irish ...

Daniel says nothing

Warm lager in Irish theme pubs, you're severed from decent drinkin' like a hand from an Irish arm.
Daniel That's not really true ...

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