MONA

An Opera in Three Acts

The Poem by Brian Hooker

The Music by Horatio Parker

Vocal Score

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MONA
AN OPERA IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA

The Roman Governor of Britain
Quintus, his son, known among the Britons as Gwynn
Arth, a British tribesman
Enya, his wife
Gloom, their son, a Druid
Caradoc, the chief Bard of Britain
Nial, a changeling
Mona, Princess of Britain and last of the line of Boadicea; foster-child of Arth and Enya

Baritone
Heroic Tenor
Bass
Soprano
Baritone
Baritone
Lyric Tenor
Dramatic Soprano (Mezzo)

ROMAN SOLDIERS; DRUIDS, BARDS; BRITONS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

The place is southwestern Britain; the time, about A.D. 100
Story of the Opera*

MONA

ACT I

Morning in midsummer. Arth's hut: a primitive and rather sombre interior of rough wood and stone, lighted only from the doorway; to the rear above which appears the Druidic sign of the Unspeakable Name, and from the opening in the roof to the right, through which the smoke of the fire ascends. Enya busy about the house, Nial lying by the fire, Mona and Gwynn in the foreground. Gwynn pleads with Mona to fulfil her troth to him, long since pledged. She answers that in his absence her old dreams of war and the Roman oppressor hurled back into the sea and of some great part for herself in the freeing of Britain have pressed closer, driving the thought of him away. Against Enya's protest she shows him on her breast the sign of the Name where with she was born; declaring herself set apart by that sign for some great destiny above womanhood. Gwynn urges that her fancies are mere loneliness, and that whatever her destiny may be they can fulfil it better together; while Nial asks innocently if God's name is written upon those who may not love. Mona relates a dream of walking between a storm-darkened forest and a raging sea: she had a naked sword, wherewith she drove back the billows that poised to plunge down upon her; but there came a veiled white figure with no face and tried to take the sword away; and when she slew him therewith the waves broke and the forest fell and overw tomed her. This dream neither Gwynn nor Enya can interpret. Arth, entering, hurls at Mona's feet the sword of a Roman soldier whom he has encountered and slain; and Mona recognizes the sword of her dream. Gwynn censures Arth for wanton folly in breaking the peace; Arth retorts with a furious tirade against Rome, in which the women hysterically join; but Gwynn prevail, and sends Arth out to bury the body. Gwynn illustrates the use of the sword with unconscious enthusiasm. Enya grows suspicious, and Mona, crying out that he looks like a Roman soldier, snatches it from him, and in so doing wounds his arm. As they stand aghast at the omen, Gloom enters and confirms it: prophesying that Gwynn shall die by that same blade. He sends away the women and ushers in Arth and Caradoc, who proposes a solemn oath of secrecy and union. Gwynn, suspecting conspiracy, is unwilling to swear himself blindly into their fellowship; but lest the secret of his own birth

*This opera won the prize offered by the Metropolitan Opera Company for the best grand opera, written in English and composed by an American.
be suspected and he lose Mona and all his influence for peace, is constrained to yield. Caradoc administers the oath with Druidic ritual; then tells Gwynn that Britain is ripe for a universal uprising, and that Mona by her descent from Boudicca and by signs and prophecies is ordained to be their leader. Gwynn furiously protests, but is overruled by Caradoc and Gloom. Mona is brought in to choose between her love and her mission. Caradoc formally recognizes her as the predestined leader. Gwynn does his utmost to hold her; but Gloom, artfully playing upon her dream and sneering at her love as a trifle, is too strong for him. She flies into an ecstasy, waving her sword and calling down ruin upon Rome. Gwynn is driven away and banished. As he disappears into the forest, Mona suddenly drops the sword, crying out his name, and breaks into tears.

ACT II

A month later. Evening. The Cromlech in the forest: A huge oak tree in the centre; at its foot an altar graven with the Sign of the Name; behind that, a crumbling stone wall in the form of a semicircle; and behind this, deep forest, through which appear the great standing stones of the outer circle. Nial alone, dancing with his shadow. In monologue he declares himself happier, being a changeling with no soul, brother to all the wild things of the earth, than his wise friends whose souls torment them. The Governor, entering at the head of a scouting party, captures him and questions him as to the evident signs of a recent gathering there; but Nial, fearless through sheer ignorance of harm, refuses to answer. As he is about to be tortured, Gwynn suddenly appears and interposes. The Governor questions him about the reported rebellion, adding that Gwynn is freely accused of treason in siding with the Britons. Gwynn, refusing to break his oath by revealing their plans, yet claims as his own work the peace of the past years, and promises that through Mona and his own influence as a Bard the threatened uprising shall be averted. The Governor is for crushing the conspiracy by immediate force, but is at length brought to refrain on condition that Gwynn shall hold the tribes from any overt act of war. On this Gwynn stakes everything and sets out to guide his father back to the Roman town. After a momentary soliloquy by Nial in the gathering darkness, Mona and Gloom enter together. They have been going about the country preparing universal rebellion; and on that night they themselves are to lead the attack upon the Roman town, whose flames will be the signal for a general uprising. Mona, inspired with the ecstasy of her mission, yet dreads their own opening battle, upon which all depends. In the enthusiasm of his reassurance, Gloom throws off the mask of priesthood and brotherliness, avowing open love of her. She silences him by turning against him his own teaching that she is not woman but a sword. After a short colloquy with Arth and Enya, in which Mona relates her triumphant progress among the tribes, the others go to prepare for the sacrifice which is to initiate the battle, leaving Mona praying alone in the moon-
light before the altar. Gwynn, entering, brushes aside the frozen holiness with which she had crushed Gloom, by defying her to call in the Druids and have him put to death; and catching her in his arms, so prevails upon her by the sheer reality of their love that she is for the moment utterly his own, wishing only to forget all else. In premature triumph, he tells her that their union shall unite Britain and Rome, and goes on to reveal the secret of his birth. But she, understanding merely that he is a Roman, without waiting to hear the rest, cries out for help. Gloom and Arth rush in, followed by Bards and Druids and a frantic horde of Britons. Gwynn is about to be torn in pieces when Mona, unable to see him slain, checks herself in the very word of denouncing him as a spy, and reminds them that he is a Bard whose person is sacred; then, bidding them make him prisoner unhurt, she hurries on the preparations for the attack. Men and women bring torches, weapons, and materials of war. The Bards and Druids gather about the altar, where Mona, Gloom and Caradoc, to the music of a barbaric chant, perform the ceremony of blessing and distributing the swords. As they receive their weapons the priests rush out to lead the onslaught, followed by the tribesmen; until the stage is left empty and dark but for Enya, who throws herself sobbing at the foot of the altar as the sound of the singing dies away in the forest.

ACT III

The same night, just before dawn. A plateau on the edge of the forest; across a valley, the Roman town in the distance. Enya and Nial come to watch and wait for tidings of the attack. Her agony of suspense and forbidding contrasts with his innocent unconcern. Instead of the expected beacon-signals of victory, scattered fugitives rush past: and from one of these Enya learns that the attack is crushed. Nial, with unconscious irony, protests that the news must be false, since God had promised them victory. Mona, stunned with shame and exhaustion, is dragged in by Gloom, who is himself mortally wounded. He confirms the tidings of defeat: the Roman garrison, swelled to an overwhelming force, was awaiting them under arms; Arth is dead; it is all over but paying the price. Mona despairs over her people who have trusted her vainly through her own vain trust in her mission; and searches her conscience for some fault or failure of her own that has ruined all. But Gloom, with savage cynicism, retorts that they have only dressed their own desires in fine names like every one else; Mona was moved by a girl’s vanity of greatness, himself by lust of power and rivalry with Gwynn; the rest was self-deception. And Mona, shocked and shaken, fixes upon her love for Gwynn as the weakness that has destroyed her work: she has saved his life, knowing him to be a Roman spy and a traitor to her people. The appearance of Gwynn, who has escaped from his guards, confirms her belief that it was he who warned the Romans. Gwynn tells them that he is the son of the Governor with authority to speak for Rome, and tries to induce her to aid him in preventing further bloodshed. But it is too late for the truth:
Gloom receives it with mere derision; and Mona, taking it for the keystone upon an arch of lies, works herself into a vengeful holiness as she listens to his protestations. At last she pretends to yield, and as he catches her in his arms stabs him with her Roman sword. In the pause that follows, Nial sees through the grey twilight of dawn the soul of Gwynn floating like a bright shadow above him and seeming to listen and to wait. The sound of an approaching army is heard in the distance, and presently the Governor enters at the head of his legions. Discovering Gwynn’s body, he tells them furiously that in slaying his son, the one Roman who befriended them and who had wasted himself to save them from their own folly, they have destroyed their last hope of mercy. Mona avows her deed, and he promises her full time in which to pay. She, at length understanding all Gwynn’s truth and her own error, takes farewell of him, laying the sword across his breast: saying that in seeking great deeds beyond love and above beauty she has done only what she must have done being herself; that the ordinary happiness through which she might have accomplished her mission was too small and too near; and regretting most that she cannot follow Gwynn to an honorable death. She bends down and kisses him on the forehead, then, rising, stands among the soldiers while they bind her hands, bidding them take their will of her; and adding, as the curtain falls, “I have had great dreams—only great dreams. . . . A woman would have won.”
Mona
Mona
An Opera in Three Acts

ACT I

THE SCENE represents the interior of Arth's hut in the forest: a rough structure of logs and thatch. To the left, a large hearth of rough stone on which a fire is burning; oaken settles about the walls; to the right, a rough table, with benches and a wooden stool; above this, a door into an inner room; in the rear wall, a large doorway, curtained with skins, on the lintel of which appears the Sign A of the Unspeakable Name, showing that a Druid has his dwelling there. Sunlit forest without.

THE TIME, morning in midsummer.

The curtain-rise discovers MONA seated by the table; ENYA above; GWYN standing near the centre of the stage; and NIAL lying on a bearskin by the fire.

Prelude
Moderato (ℓ = 100)

Horatio Parker. Op. 71

Copyright, 1911, by G. Schirmer
(Curtain)

Gwynn

Not long now, till the end! Until the

moving, as if to herself) Gwynn

end, the end! Not long until the end of all my doubt, Not long until the

end of all thy fear! Kisses half-willing, half-reluctant

arms, And eyes that shirk their promise. I have made peace,
And brought down rest over this angry land,
Whose trouble was thy trouble: Now I make Mine own all
I have known so long for mine.
All thy dear heart hath giv'n,

Mona (still without moving)

all! Have I all To givethee, Gwynn?

Gwynn

Mona (turning to Gwynn)

Still the old fear! Not fear! Only these

(with more animation)

many days I have not heard Thy voice, nor seen thine eyes, and the
old dreams
Press closer, and thy face fades, lost among A

Tempo giusto \( (d = 108) \)

sea of raging faces and a forest of whiteswords; and thy

voice, murmuring joy, Blows down a wind of war-cries;

Meno mosso

what hath held thee So long and far away?
Meno mosso ($d = 76$)

Gwynn

Only the need Of making all things ready for our

Più mosso Enya (to Gwynn, sharply)

love.

Hast thou made the bride ready to be

Ancora piú

won? (d = 138)

It is this

dim. rit.

$p$ meno mosso

house: there is a shadow here. There is a shadow
(toucic h: breast)

here, Gwynn, here.  

(espr. poco rit.  pp

Gwynn

ad lib.

Now I build a house for us twain in the forest here,

Where
sunlights laugh in the moving leaves all day,

sweet blossoms brighten, where all
	night Earth breathes joy and the moon makes

mystery Of silvery glamour!
Thou shalt never build that house, Gwynn.

Gwynn

Mona! Mona!
Allegro moderato (\( \text{\textit{d} = 116} \))

What new change?

Enya

\( \text{\textit{d} = 109} \)  Trouble her not—There is more in her than

Gwynn

thy love can know. Therefore I love her.
Dear, I am not changed; That is my trouble, that I cannot change. I cannot be like other women, loved, And loving, happy; I was tenderly and slowly never so:

Only, because of thy dear looks, I dreamed of
love and thee a little— Being young and thrilled with May, a

woman, feeling hands Of little children touch me in the dark, Unborn,

crying to me to mother them... I dreamed of

(Mona rises. Nial turns to watch)

them and thee. Waking, I know That I am set a-

(@ 100) animato subito

rittenuto
Mona (laying her hand upon her bosom as if to open her robe)

Dear, No fancy.

(Opening her dress and showing the mark on her breast. All glance astonished from her to the mark above the door)

Enya (starting forward)

Look! You shall not show him! No! Look!

The Name! God's great Name!
Enya (to Gwynn)  
**Gwynn**

Better for thee  
Not to have known.

(p = 100)

Name that none may speak!  
What means this, Mona?

Più mosso  
Mona

I was born therewith.  
I cannot read its meaning, but I know Some

Great adventure waits for me, since God Hath set his seal up-on me.
How shall I Tarry for love?

Nial

I cannot understand.

stand— I have no soul. What is this great thing that Mona

has to do, That hinders loving? Does God
write his name
On them that shall not love?
I have it not!

I cannot understand;
I cannot love,
be-

cause I have no soul.
I dare not love
tranquillo

Gwynn
— until my soul is free.
Thou art free!
più agitato
How shall this great task divide Thy fate and mine a-sunder?

accel.

Being one, We shall be stronger for all good.
cresc. ed accel.

Più tranquillo

Dear love, What hinders the fulfillment of our dream?

pp

Mona

I have had other dreams— other dreams.
Gwynn

Love, thou hast been Alone and list-less,
and the

warm youth, pent Within thee, frustrate, like new wine that works Closecovered,
Vapors up these visions.

Come with me! Come with me!

Come with me, Mona! take life, and leave them!

Come with me Out of the shadows!

Come with me, Mona!
Come out of the aimless days, Out of the empty nights!
Find thou Humanity,

And God shall find thee greatness!

Come with me, Mona!
Mona

Listen, Gwynn—
And thou, mother, in dream-lore deeply wise—

(standing alone C.)

Three nights together have I dreamed this dream:

walked upon the wind-y beach between
Dark forest and dim sea. Low-swollen clouds,

Heav-y with storm, gloomed o-ver-head, and hung

Bel-lying against the tree-tops.

Close a-shore. Tower'd one huge wave,
curving o-ver me  As a ser-pent curves to strike,

crested with cloud And foam, the

hol-low gulf beneath a-live, a-live With

tremu-lous lights and an-gry glints of green, High
o-ver-head loom-ing: so-that I

seemed To walk in a long cavern

roofed with cloud And walled with foam and for-est.

And I bare On my breast a na-ked sword
close-held, As a mother holds her babe.

So when the surge Poised to plunge down upon me,

I thrust forth The sword,

(d = 96)
pointing it seaward,

and the sea Bent back-ward and for-}

bore.

seemed one stood Beside me, velled in a white shroud, whose face I
could not see, that strove to snatch a-way My sword.

Therefore I smote and slew him!

Then The surge plunged and the clouds burst and the

trees Fell, thun-der-rent, and_
whelmed me!

And I woke Trembling, and seeming still to see the sword

And the grim cloud and the green surge. And now

Three nights together have I dreamed this dream.

Gwynn

And the dream
thrice beholden prophesies... I wonder Mother?

Enya (still seated)

Dreaming of the sea

Foretells great happenings;

dreaming of a sword,

Struggle.

But then the forest and the cloud,

And the white figure, with no face—

Nay,
child, I cannot tell, I cannot read this dream!

mocks us with a future half fore-known.

Nial!

never dream?

Always, I think, Or never. Night by night, and day by day...

It must be all true, or else...

all a dream.

I alone between...
Gwynn: surge and forest—Gwynn! What if the sea be—Rome?

Gwynn (startled): Rome?

M.: piu animato

Piu mosso: black flood thatwhelms our miserable land!

G.: No! (d = 120)
Arth (striding in, hurls a Roman sword at Mona's feet)

Here, child! I bring thee a child's play-thing!

Enya

(all rising)

Arth!

Mona

Father!

Mona (taking up the sword and looking at it wonderingly)

It is the sword I dreamed of in my dream!
Gwynn  

The sword of Rome!

Father, whence camethis?

A.

One That was a Tempo giusto

(p ritenuto)

Roman soldier gave it me Yonder. These Romans are a weakly breed!

Poco allegro (d. 108)

Enya

Thou art a swordless man;

PPP piu rit.

piu agitato

It is not lawful For thee to fight or to bear weapons.
Arth (he makes the gesture of strangling an enemy)

Bah! I had no weapon, only these bare hands of an old man!

Enya

Blood! Blood! Evermore

Arth (looking at his hands)

Blood! Only a little, bitten from his lips in dying!

Allegro

Thou hast roused the wolf!

Enya

Ah, now we shall endure
vengeance!
Now, when our sleep was safe, and our

days free!

Arth

Free!
Hear the woman! Ay, free like dogs, free to the lash and the

chain!
Licking the wolf's feet lest we die—New stripes over old scars!

One shame alike to sting
Surrender and rebellion.
tribute wrung Out of dry hunger!—swords taken away From free hands!

Our shrines desolate! our Bards Forbidden worship!

Our Kings dead, our women Shared with our lords!

all men with blood in them Hat-ing the wolf anew with each new day,

Eating and drinking hatred!
Gwynn (with calm authority, facing Arth)

Thou art a fool, Arth! Blood will follow this!

Moderato

Arth (scornfully)

Animato

What I have ever done,

Gwynn, the man of peace! What dost thou here?

Moderato (d = 76)

Guarded this house from trouble! Thou hast broke The peace, wantonly

slain a Roman! Fool! What hope has Britain save in Rome’s good-will?

Arth

Rome’s good-
will! The embrace of the soft scourge!

Kisses of the kindly spur! A fire's friendship, a wolf's love!

Allegro

Britain! Old Britain!

Mona (waving the sword in a frenzy)

Britain! Old Britain! Ru-in to Rome!

Allegro (d. 120)

Be still, women!

Ru-in to Rome!