

Panthea, Initiations and Festivals of the Goddess
by Olivia Robertson

11. Communion with the World of Spirits
31st October- 2nd November

Oracle of the Goddess Brighid

Priestess: Triple Goddess Brighid, Maiden Bride, Great Queen, Enchantress, we would awaken our souls to commune with the World of Spirits. For we know that inevitably we journey to that land where dwell those who have passed through the Veil to the Great Unknown. Draw us to Thy Haven of everlasting joy and goodness.

Oracle: The division between these two worlds is only in your mind. In verity you travel to other spheres while your body sleeps. It is only at dawn and at twilight, at Beltaine and Samhain, that the veil is drawn aside for those who seek greater consciousness. All spheres form part of one mighty spiral of Time travelling through Space. Consciousness expands with size. The Magi learn the art of ascending and descending the spiral not by a journey round the sun through repeated rebirth, but through entering the very hub of the Cosmic Spirit. There, centered in all-pervading Deity, they may experience all spheres at will.

It is I Who bestow on newly arrived souls the waters of baptism which bring vision and inspiration. It is My fiery Wheel that enflames creative artists, all those who would transform this world for greater good. And at last with a touch of my serpent wand I draw the soul away from material existence through the Dolmen Gateway to the world beyond the grave.

The Magi of the College of Wisdom, which exists in all lands, learn to transmute their outer selves, in changing form appearing. Thus they can adapt to many spheres of being, and so gain experience from past cycles of time, and learn also from knowledge of the future. Through metamorphosis they relive their evolutionary journey through amoeba, fish, reptile, animal, human, and know themselves as the Winged Sidhe. The good they make part of themselves: the evil they reject. By union with their true Selves such pilgrim souls touch Divine Essence. From henceforth the Gods and Goddesses may manifest through them, individually, originally, so no personality is lost.

At the beginning of any work, the Magi face the Deity with adoration. But to accomplish the task they must turn their back on the Divinity, Who then enlightens them from behind through spiritual inflow. Hence great works are accomplished. But when these are well done, the Magi turn again to the Deity, giving thanks, and return Crown and Wand to She who gave them. So shall the Swan Children return with humility to daily existence, knowing that at dawn and dusk, spring and autumn, they may draw the earth and the World of Spirits into harmony.

At the gates. Prs. wears copper snake crown, indigo cloak with serpent design in gold, purple and green, she bears snake entwined wand. Pr. wears indigo headdress and cloak with dragon design in orange, crimson and blue. He bears long staff. Companions wear copper head circles and many-coloured cloaks with Gaelic designs. They carry gifts of cakes and honey.

Pr: Companions, we are assembled on this holy Samhain Eve to make communion with Spirits from other Spheres. At this time the veil between the psychic realms and ours is lifted. The Dolmen Gateways to the

Sidhe Mounds of the Faery people are open. Let us follow the custom of our ancestors who offered food to their beloved families and friends in the Spirit World, and offerings to the Deities and faeries.

Prs: The period of Samhain, the 31st October to November 2nd, was used by the Magi of the Gaelic College of Wisdom for initiating candidates into their Mysteries. The chosen Candidate was conducted by the Hierophant through the Dolmen Gateway into the inner chamber of a tumulus. The Sacred Triad of Elders invoked the Presence of the Morrigan, Goddess of the Mysteries. The Candidate was then placed on a sarcophagus and the Maga Hierophant induced in him or her a cataleptic trance. In this death-like state the body was left for three days, guarded by a hound at the foot of the sarcophagus. While the Magi prayed, the soul of the Candidate was guided by a Spirit Guide into the very body of the earth, there to undergo a succession of ordeals.

Pr: If successful, the Candidate was then brought back to the surface of the earth and from thence ascended to the spheres of the Moon, Sun and Stars. The successful Candidate spent the winter with the Magi in their College, learning to use wisely the knowledge and powers acquired during the Initiation. On February the first, when pronounced acceptable, the new Maga or Magi was presented to the rejoicing people at the Dolmen Gate, wearing a copper crown or priestly headdress, and holding wand or staff. At this Festival of the Bride of Spring, Brighid, the new member of the College would give a Blessing to all beings, with upraised wand or staff.

Prs: Let us make procession to the High Altar.

Music. Procession. High Altar is draped in white with 9 lighted candles, bowl of water and burning incense. Feast on table and gong nearby. Comps. leave gifts on table.

Priestess: (*offers incense and raises wand*) I invoke the Goddess, Brighid, Daughter of Dana, Goddess of poetry, healing and all wells and springs. (*Prs. anoints each brow saying*) May you receive true vision and inspiration.

Prs: Harken to the words of Brighid when She appeared to the old woman Mairi Nic Ruaridh Donn, who hailed Her as St. Bridget of the Mantle, who, it is told, gave her mantle to the infant Jesus:

"I am older than Brighid of the Mantle, Mary, and it is you that should know that. I put songs and music on the wind before ever the bells of the chapel were rung in the West or heard in the East. And I have been a breath in your heart. And the day shall dawn that will see Me coming into the hearts of men and women like a flame upon the dry grass, like a flame of wind in a great wood. For the time of change is at hand, Mairi Nic Ruaridh Donn - though not for you, old withered leaf in the dry branch, though for you too, when you come to Us and see all things in the Pools of Life yonder."

Prs: (*offers incense and lifts wand*) I invoke the Dark Goddess, the Morrigan. I hail Thee, Macha the Crow, Queen of Winter, old withered leaf on the dry branch!

Pr: (*offers incense and lifts staff*) I invoke Manannan MacLir, God of the Ocean. Hark to the words of Murdo Mac Ian telling of Manannan coming to him in the Hebrides:

"When He comes in at the door He is always the same, a tall Man with the great beauty on Him, His hands hidden in the white cloak He wears; a bright cold curling flame under the soles of His feet, and a crest like a bird's on His head, like white canna blowing in the wind. When He touched me I saw his arms were like water, and I saw the seaweed floating among the bones of His hand. And when He came to me again He said to me: 'Murdo, you have got a clean heart. And you will have three times eighty years of youth and joy before you have your long sleep. And that is a true word. It will be when the wild geese fly North again!' And He rose and went away. I watched Him go into the sea, and I heard Him hurling great

stones and dashing them. 'These are the kingdoms of the world', I heard Him crying in the mist."

Prs: And when the wild geese flew North that year, the soul of Murdo Mac Ian went with them. He went where Manannan promised he should go. Be sure the promise is now joy and peace to him to whom it was made.

Pr: That we may learn of the other world where we all must go at life's end, may a Mystery be presented.

Gong is struck twice.

Mystery of the Children of Lir

Actors: Charwoman in black shawl holds long brush. Philosopher, Writer and Occultist with knife, wear cloaks. King Lir and Queen Aoife in royal attire. Daughter and sons of Lir in white. Sidhe in red, green, blue and yellow.

Char: *(sweeps floor angrily)* It's bad enough with the hunting gentry mucking up the house with cigar ends and empty whiskey glasses - but these occultists are worse again! There is me, jaded, on my bended knees scrubbing off fresh white paint on my nice polished floor - and the place stinking to high heaven with some sticky stuff and my hands black with charcoal - here the gentlemen come - I'd best make myself scarce. *(Exit, muttering imprecations)*

Enter Philosopher, Writer and Occultist.

Phil: As Emperor of the Gaelic Elders of the Order of the Golden Dawn, I have summoned our Triad for an important purpose. How can we, representing Philosophy, the Arts and Occultism, bring to light the Ancient Wisdom, which the Magi thought fit to conceal beneath the incoherent fables of Celtic myth? Yet this we must do if our Celtic renaissance is to take place.

Writer: I admit the difficulty. The conscious art of Greece is so lucid and harmonious both in thought and expression, that it has inspired thinkers and artists throughout three thousand years. The Celtic Magi have successfully succeeded in burying their secrets beneath a welter of turbulent and irrational legends. The Gods and Goddesses are disguised as their namesakes, mortal Kings and Queens who are only too human. It is also a problem that we can't read Gaelic.

Occultist: We can summon forth the Powers to do our will!

Phil: How? We only employ the Qabalistic and Egyptian magical conjurations. Their use might well infuriate our Gaelic Spirits, if they are as nationally minded as their earthly offspring!

Occultist: I am determined to discover the Three Secrets of the Gaelic Magi: the Cosmic Spiral, the Dolmen Gateway to the Spheres, and Metamorphosis.

Phil: What? Would you change us to swans?

Occultist: To dare, to do and to take the consequences, that is my way. *(searches floor)* Where is my triangle? Oh well. The time is now. We must do without. *(produces knife and makes invoking pentagram)* I invoke the Goddess of the Occult, the Morrigan! May She bring to Light that which has been concealed.

Enter Charwoman: (she knocks three times on floor with brush handle) I am The Morrigan! I come not at your summoning, but at My Will. What you wish to undertake is not impossible, but for you it could be so. For to succeed in your quest, you must give the Gaelic Deities acknowledgment of Their Divinity. But this you dare not do, because of your respect and fear is still with your Patriarchal creed. But if you fail, you

may yet be able to hand on the torch to your children.

Mor. stands to one side and lifts the brush. Enter Lir.

Morrigan: With the Eye of Vision behold the Mystery of the Children of Lir.

Music. Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" is relevant.

Morrigan: Behold King Lir, grief stricken. His four beautiful children, the twins Fionnuala and her brother Aodh, and Fiachre and Conn, noble sons, have been bewitched by their Stepmother. They have been transmuted into swan-like Sidhe. Though they live, to their father they are as dead.

Lir: Alas! Ever since my first wife, Aobh, mother of my beloved children died, I have known unceasing sorrow. To sustain my wife's memory, I made a second marriage with her sister. But my new Queen, Aoife, is an evil Enchantress! With a stroke of her serpent wand on their heads, light as a feather, she has said a dreadful spell upon them. She has transformed their very being. They are lost to me.

Enter his children, entranced, smiling.

Fin: Come, my brothers, let us call upon the Sidhe of Fire and Earth, Water and Air, to join our Dance.

Enter Sidhe. They dance.

Fin: Slowly we come to birth from the eggs lovingly warmed by the fire of our Mother. We make our first ungainly steps upon the earth. We gain confidence and move to the water's edge. Come, let us float upon the still waters of the lake, in line after our Mother! (*Dancers wheel around as if on lake.*) We wonder at our perfect reflections, double and yet one in tranquil beauty. The waters become troubled and we raise our wings and soar into the sky! We form a triangle as we approach the sun. But there are storms and we find safety on a tree covered island. We discuss love. (*Dancers form pairs*) And we call other souls to join us!

Fin: (*to Lir*) The old become young again if they join our dance. There is an island far away, around which the sea-horses of Manannan glisten, flowing on their white course against its shining shore. Come with us, father, on our swans' wings!

Aodh: There is a mighty tree there with blossom and singing birds. Colours of every hue gleam through the soft fields ranged around their music, Come with us, father, on our swans' wings!

Con: Be as Manannan, father, who is immortal. He rides with us in his golden three-spoked wheel, gliding over ocean into the sky, shrouded in magic mist. Come with us, father, on our swans' wings!

Lir: Bewitched children, do you despise our noble guests, who await you at the banquet? Will you not partake, as once you did, of the Boar's head and good ale?

Fin: Not for us such fare. The Boar is our friend in Tir-na-nOg. There the Wild Hunt is unknown.

Lir: Princes seek your hand in marriage, Fionnuala. Will you not laugh with them, as once you did, and make your choice?

Fin: On Manannan's Wheel I have travelled thrice three hundred years into the future, and have wept at the desolation I found there. This fine palace was in ruins, and the noble princes rested beneath grassy tumuli. For me now they are as walking shadows in the land of the living dead.

Lir: Aodh, Fiachre, Conn, become men again! Hunt with us and make brave warfare with our heroes against our kingdom's enemies!

Aodh: Once I gloried in my sword of light. But in Tir-na-nOg there is no warfare. Without sorrow, without grief, without death, without any sickness is the Many Coloured Land. I shall kill no more, neither man nor beast. Rather shall I seek the Divine in all things.

Fiac: On Manannan's Wheel I travelled thrice three hundred years into the past, and I felt bitter grief to see kingdoms fall and the death of heroes and the keening of women. I saw no good come of it. I shall fight no more. The lovely sounds of music and noble poetry shall heal our souls.

Conn: In Tir-na-nOg there is neither 'mine' nor 'thine'. There dwell a matchless people without sin, without cruelty. Though the plain of Eire is fair to see, it is desolate once you know the Great Plain. I shall learn to create a better realm on this earth through the art of magic.

Lir: My heart is broken. I see my children lost in insubstantial visions. Who can break this spell?

Enter Queen Aoife with snake wand.

Queen Aoife: Only she who made it! I honour your fidelity to the old ways, Great King. But whatever the suffering it brings, the transformation of the human soul shall come to those who seek it. You may not protect your children against their will. The Children of Light shall bear wings. Know that I am in verity The Morrigan, concealed in human form! And you in your true self are the God Lir of the all-containing Sea of Space... My power wanes as Mid-Winter gives place to Spring.

Music. Sibelius' "Swan of Tuonela" is suitable.

Aodh, Fiachre and Conn slowly sink to the ground in trance.

Morr: (to Fin) Fionnuala, My sister, show forth your true Self! Return to the earth as the White Bride of Spring, the Goddess Brighid! (Morrigan hands Fin. her serpent wand.) Restore the winged souls of our children to this fair land. There they shall bring wisdom, joy and enchantment to the world of the living dead. So shall there be a fine harvest. But know that as Samhain draws nigh they shall once again yearn for Tir-na-nOg, and I shall return. They shall fly through the night to their starry haven.

She leaves.

Brigid touches the 3 sleepers on head with wand. Slowly they awaken and stand.

Brigid: "Return, O Winged Triad, return to earth
The sacred sign upon the Holy Mountain
Shines in white fire.
From the Heaven of Heavens descend on earth!
On earth, enchantress, Mother, to our home
In Thee we press,
Thrilled by Thy fiery breath and wrapt in some
Tenderness.
The homeward swans uncertain o'er their nest
Wheel in the dome,
Fraught with dim dreams of some enraptured rest,
Another Home."

My brothers, Sage, Bard, Magus, from henceforth your nights shall be as day, and your winters shall be eternal summer. For you there is no death. You are transformed.

Lir is embraced by his children. Gong is struck once. End of Mystery.

Prs: Companions, the holy time is come for us to commune with those who visit us with goodwill from the World of Spirits.

Communion. Messages are shared. Loving radiations are sent forth and received.

Pr: Let us offer our gifts!

Cakes and honey are offered to loved guests on altar. Feast is enjoyed.

Prs. and Pr. give thanks to the Deities.

Pr: May all our loved visitors from other spheres and ourselves depart with the Divine Blessing.

End of Rite.

SOURCES: "The Winged Destiny," Fiona MacLeod, Chapman & Hall, 1904. "Song and Its Fountains," A. E. MacMillan. "A Celtic Miscellany," Hurlstone Jackson, Routledge & Kegan Paul. "A Social History of Ancient Ireland," Joyce, Longman, 1903. "The Book of Irish Poetry," Alfred Percival Graves, "The Talbot Press," Dublin. "Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts," Patrick Kennedy, MacMillan, 1966. "Myths & Legends of the Celtic Race," Rolleston. "Lebor Gabal Erenn," trans. Macalister, Irish Texts Society, Dublin.

Copyright Notice: The FOI Liturgy from this website is copyright protected. Copying the Liturgy text or pages to another website or publication, is prohibited. Printing of individual rites by FOI members for their personal and group ritual use is encouraged and allowed.