

Forest - 2001

OPENING CHANT:
INTO FOREST HALLS

Harry Treece POEM:
THE MAGIC WOOD
CHORUS: The wood is full of shining eyes
The wood is full of creeping feet
The wood is full of tiny cries
Dare you go to the wood at night?

DEB:
I met a man with eyes of glass
And a finger as curled as a wriggling worm
And hair all red with rotted leaves
And a stick that hissed like a summer snake

CHORUS.

JANE:
He sang me a song in backward words
And drew me a dragon in the air
I saw his teeth through the back of his head
And a rat's eye winking from his hair

CHORUS.

DEB:
He made me a penny out of a stone
And showed me the way to catch a lark
With a straw and a nut and whispered word
And a pennysworth of ginger all wrapped up in a leaf

CHORUS.

JANE:
He asked me my name, and where I lived;
I told him a name from my Book of Tales;
He asked me to come with him into the wood
And dance with the Kings from under the hills.

CHORUS.

DEB We dare....

DEB & JANE And we're there!

DEB We have entered a deep magical forest. Great ancient trees surround us. Branches vault above us, forming a chapel in the dark leaf. Moonlight spills through the branches, suffusing the many forest paths with a pale glow.

JANE The paths criss-cross, traveling between all places and all times. We have no idea which one we should follow. We turn to the Keeper of this forest chapel, the Green Man. Maybe he'll show us which one to take.

DEB With his staff he gestures to a group of paths. In a language that whispers like leaves he lets us know that any path we take will lead to magic. We choose one. With a respectful nod to the Green Man we leave his forest hall and follow that path out of the woods to a village. Cottages lie before us, and a hill. But the forest encompasses everything, stretching in all directions, to the horizons.

JANE At the edge of the village is a cottage with a lighted window. Inside, a woman sings to her baby, as the baby's grandmother stirs the fire on the hearth. The sound of the mother's voice drifts out to us and into the village and the forest.

MEDIEVAL WELSH CRADLE-SONG:
DINOGAT'S CLOAK

DEB The patter of drums!

JANE The shaking of bells!

DEB Down the road a procession of dancers weaves through the village. The ribbons of their costumes flutter like bright birds, the antlers of their garlands gleam in the moonlight. The dancers stop before every cottage calling forth the people within.

JANE The mother folds the speckled cloak and replaces it in a wooden chest. Leaving her sleeping babe with her own mother, she goes to join the dancers. We go, too.

DEB For the cycle of the seasons continues, as well as the traditions that honor them. The people gather to honor the forest, and to celebrate the hunt, as their mothers and fathers have done each year since before there ever was a village. The festival has begun!

INSTRUMENTAL:
ABBOTS BROMLEY HORN DANCE

JANE We wend our way throught the village, past harvested fields and up the hillside. On top of the hill are tables piled with food. Over there, a group of villagers weaves a figure out of twigs and corn husks. Here, some children toss hazelnuts into the bonfire, and clap and cheer as the nuts ignite like stars.

DEB Men and women join hands in a circle dance around the bonfire. Someone passes animal masks to the dancers. We see a wolf here, a fox, and there—a weasel.

SONG/INSTRUMENTAL:

J'ai Vu Le Loup, Le Renard, Le Lievre/J'ai Vu le Loup, le Renard et la Belette

DEB The festivities escalate. Six of the antler-bearers fall into two lines of three each, dancing face to face. They advance upon each other, clash horns, step back, then clash horns again! The musicians play a frenzied music, and more people join the circle dance. Drink is passed around: mead, wine, nut-brown ale.

Jelaluddin Rumi POEM:

TONIGHT WITH WINE BEING POURED

(Jane recites)

Tonight with wine being poured
and instruments singing among themselves
one thing is forbidden,
one thing:

DEB/JANE: sleep

JANE In the light of the bonfire, the Green Man stands, observing the celebration. He lifts a mug, and throws back a brew. Then he, too, joins in the dance!

INSTRUMENTAL:

MASQUE

SILENCE. Jane flips levers, while Deb settles to sleep. Then J. settles to sleep. J. & D stretch & yawn, coming "awake". D. flips levers while J. speaks...

JANE Ah, dawn. We awake to the first light of day, hoping see a glorious sunrise, but all around us –

DEB It's so cold –

JANE On the ground – fluttering in the air –

DEB Snow!

JANE While we've been sleeping winter has settled onto the countryside. We make our way down the hill, and back into the forest.

DEB At the edge of the woods we glimpse a face made of the last autumn leaves—an antlered man—the Green Man.

JANE He invites us to follow him into the ever green, deepening forest.

SONG:

SNOW ON THE SUMMIT

DEB Snow falls now, in flakes so thick and huge that the trees appear as tall dark ghosts through it.

JANE The Green Man whispers to us. He tells us of creatures within his forest, and how they spend the long winter nights.

Deb plucks an A & an E.

DEB Deep in the forest is a bear's den. Within it, a mother bear sings to her cubs of the long winter, and of the spring to come.

{Deb plucks the notes again, and lets the ring decay before we begin.}

SONG:
BINWAG'S LULLABY

JANE In this wintry forest, we too dream of the sun's return.

SONG:
WINTER, FIRE & SNOW

JANE The Green Man raises his staff to invoke the arc of the rising sun. He turns to us and beckons for music, a joyful tune to waken the woods.

INSTRUMENTAL:
WILLAFJORD

DEB: The snow has stopped, and above us the sky has cleared. Sunlight shines in the clear blue sky.

JANE The Green Man nods and thanks us all [include audience]for joining him in the forest, and for helping him to usher in the turning of the year.

DEB He asks us for one last song before he sends us on our journey home.

SONG:
HIN HIN HARADALA

the end!