

# Columba



a play  
with music

By JULIET BOOBBYER  
& JOANNA SCIORTINO

MUSIC BY  
ELAINE GORDON  
with others

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a play with music

The story of a young boy who is born with a gift for music and who grows up to become a great musician. The play is a celebration of the power of music to bring people together and to create a better world.

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This play was inspired by a book **THE MAGNIFICENT GAEL** by Reginald B. Hale, published in 1976 by World Media Productions, Canada.

History is woven, with blood and struggle, out of the fears, hates, hopes and loves of men. What comes down to us as a dry date of a king's reign or a great battle is only the tombstone of these earth-shattering forces. This is a play about great men who have long since disappeared over the horizon of time, but their evening shadows still beckon us forward. It is a tribute to Columba, Kenneth, Mungo and their many brave friends.

They shout to us across fourteen centuries from a world in torment:

Here is the meaning of life, man's relationship with God  
in this world and on into the next.  
Here is the 'task eternal', the building of a new society  
within the ruins of the old.

The foundation they laid with such vigour became in the following four centuries a new building of richness, variety and strength – Christian Europe.

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"How can we forget Ireland, where the sun of faith rose for us?"

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**Columba**  
*a play with music*

by  
Juliet Boobbyer  
Joanna Sciortino

music composed by  
Elaine Gordon  
with  
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Duncan Morison  
Michael O'Callaghan

**FOWLER WRIGHT BOOKS**  
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## ABOUT COLUMBA

When a Scottish friend sent us a book about St Columba of Iona suggesting that it might contain material for a play, it was the beginning of an adventure involving four years of hard work and many miles of travel.

Columcille, to use his familiar Irish name, is, after Patrick, Ireland's greatest early Christian hero. He is also the best known and loved of all the Scottish saints. For the authors, however, in spite of our Celtic ancestry, his story was an unknown piece of history. As we worked in Oxford, doing our research at the Bodleian Library and using as much contemporary material as possible in the script, we discovered riches and treasures undreamed of.

Columba, a sixth century Irish prince, gifted with all the talents to have made him a great High King, turned down his birthright to become a monk. His nature in early manhood was as stormy as the turbulent times in which he lived. The crisis in his career and the transformation in his character which followed, resulted in his exile to Scotland. There his life work could be said to mark the beginning of a new age. The so-called Dark Ages have also been called the Golden Age of the Celts – the bridge between Roman civilisation and medieval Europe.

Columba and his fellow monks made Ireland literate. From Iona and other monasteries they bound together the warring tribes of Scotland with a common faith and started to Christianize the North of England. In the years ahead the Irish saints and scholars were to become the intellectual leaders of Europe. Their schools sent out the Peregrini, bringing culture and faith to a continent disintegrating into barbarism.

As we worked on the story of Columba, giving it dramatic form, and clothing it in flesh and blood, we increasingly realised how deep was the debt that Britain and Europe owe to Ireland – an historical fact of which many of us are ignorant on the eastern side of the Irish Sea. In gratitude to Ireland, then, this play was written, and in the belief that changes as fundamental as those set in motion by Columba and his friends could happen in our own equally confused and violent age.

Columba – statesman, prince, priest, scholar and sailor, was also a poet and a musician. His story could never have been told without music. Elaine Gordon from Cork, working and researching with Michael O'Callaghan (University College, Cork) and Duncan Morison from the Outer Hebrides, wrote the lovely melodies and background music.

COLUMBA was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1978 at the Netherbow Theatre, the Church of Scotland Arts Centre. In the next two years there were six different productions of the play, presented by the Adamnan Players. All of these were directed by Elisabeth Tooms, who first began to direct plays at Oxford University in the '70s. She it was who helped knock the script into shape and trained the many actors, both professional and non-professional, who took part. At the heart of the company there were a number of men and women, including the authors, long associated with the work of Moral Re-Armament. For them, as for many others taking part, the staging of COLUMBA was an expression of their Christian commitment. "Thy will be done on earth . . ."

COLUMBA was performed all over Scotland from Alloway to the Orkneys and there were performances in Wales and in many parts of England. Among other places in London it was given at the Crown Court Church of Scotland, the Irish Centre in Camden Square and in Westminster Cathedral Hall. It was played in theatres, halls, churches and cathedrals – St Mungo's in Glasgow,

St Deiniol's in Bangor and in the Abbey Church of St Albans; also in many schools as varied in tradition as St Benedict's Abbey School, Fort Augustus and Glenwood Secondary School, Castlemilk, Glasgow.

For all the company it meant a sacrifice of time and money. Funds were raised from the sale of tickets and by gifts – everything from blankets and curtains for our first costumes to sacks of potatoes, accommodation, the use of cars and money in varying amounts, small and large. None of us who were responsible for these tours will ever again doubt that Columba's High King of Heaven abundantly provides for and looks after all those who put their hand in His and launch forth in faith.

Juliet Boobyer  
Joanna Sciortino

Oxford 1981



The play has proved effective in a very simple production, a story told as it were by a group of bardic players or monks. The minimum cast that has been used is 6 men and 3 women, who can play different roles (except for Kenneth and Columba who should remain constant throughout). It could equally well be done with a large number of people. Minimal stage directions have been used and as much as possible is left to the imagination of the director. Music is an integral part of the play, binding the whole together and carrying the action forward. The melodies of the songs are printed at the back of the script.

N.B. The spelling of names is in the Scottish Gaelic throughout except where Anglicised. Careful attention should be paid to the pronunciation. Some of the most difficult names in the text are 'Culdremne' – pr: Cooldrevn; 'Druim Catt' – pr: Drum Kate; 'Eochaidh' – pr: Yochy. 'ch' is soft as in 'loch'. These are of course approximate.



## CAST

in order of appearance

<b>Kenneth of Achabo</b>	storyteller.
<b>Eithne</b>	Princess of Leinster. A princess in her own right, a proud, ambitious, warm-hearted woman, honoured by her peers and devoted to her son. She became a devout and holy woman and died on Hinba, Columba's island and retreat near Iona.
<b>COLUMBA or Colum</b>	a man considered to be kingworthy in every way, handsome, charming, a warrior, a poet and musician. Many believed he had the gift of second sight. He passes from 16 to 70 in the course of the play.
<b>Deirdre</b>	Columba's old nurse.
<b>Bec macDe</b>	(pronounce: Baig macJay) Arch Druid. A Druid spent many years learning the law and traditions of the tribe. He was a priest, a man of feared supernatural powers and his wide knowledge was part of the power he wielded. He would be about ten years older than Columba.
<b>Slave-girl</b>	King Diarmit's (pr: Jeermit) house-slave, of some value.
<b>Two Warriors</b>	King Diarmit's personal bodyguard.
<b>Finnian</b>	Abbot of Clonard. He founded at Clonard the most influential seat of learning in Ireland. The revolutionary Christianity of the monasteries instilled a loyalty above tribalism and clan. At this time a fairly old man.
<b>Ciaran</b>	a monk, quite young. Unlike most of the monks he did not come from a noble family.
<b>Laisran</b>	a monk. He later became a famous hermit.
<b>Rhydderch</b>	(pr: Ritherch) King of Strathclyde, 25 years old, an outstanding personality who became a great leader with a passionate concern for his people. (His name is in Welsh).
<b>Irish Peasant</b>	an elderly man.
<b>Peasant Woman</b>	wife of the above.
<b>Colman</b>	an old Pictish farmer.
<b>Lugbe</b>	(pr: Loogvy) Columba's secretary and personal assistant, could be any age.
<b>Woman</b>	wife of an Iona oarsman.
<b>Genereus</b>	a Saxon monk, the Abbey cook.
<b>Serving Woman</b>	at Inverness.
<b>Fisherman</b>	from a village on the shores of Loch Ness.
<b>Brude</b>	High King of the Picts, his name spread terror in Scotland. Powerful, energetic, scheming, his granddaughter is his only weakness.
<b>Domelch</b>	(pr: Dovelch) Brude's granddaughter. When she meets Columba she is of marriageable age, a high-spirited, intelligent girl, used to her own way, but passionate and loyal as well.
<b>Broichan</b>	(pr: Broychan) a Druid. An unpleasant, frightening old man, involved with the darker aspects of magic and ritual, accepted as normal, if horrible.
<b>Slave-girl</b>	a captive from Christian Dalriada, Broichan's unwilling concubine.
<b>Mungo</b>	(Kentigern) Bishop of Glasgow. Mungo means 'the beloved one'. He was brought up by a priest who found him as a baby on a river-bank. An ascetic and a vegetarian, he was a close friend of Rhydderch and was also 25 when he fled Strathclyde.
<b>Aidan</b>	King of Dalriada – a man in the prime of life, a seasoned warrior, he has the makings of a statesman. When Aidan was crowned King of Scottish Dalriada by Columba, he was the first monarch in British history to receive Christian consecration.



## SONGS AND NOTES

### SCENE

#### Prologue

Weep for the World – the company. This song is based on the words of St Jerome “Oh, weep for the empire, Mainz razed, Lyon devastated . . . suddenly comes news of Rome’s fall. The light of all the world is extinguished.”

**Eithne’s Dream – Eithne**

### ACT I

#### Scene i

*Connaught c.538*

#### Scene ii

*Clonard c.540-546*

**Clonard – Kenneth and monks**

**Monks’ Working Song – monks.** Based on Finnian’s teaching and the Rule of Columcille.

**Purity, Wisdom and Prophecy – Columba.** He is supposed to have prayed for these three gifts.

**Derry Mine – Columba.** A translation of Columba’s own poem.

*Scene iii Tara c.560*

*Scene iv Ulster c.562*

**Ballad of Culdremne – Eithne**

**O Son of my God – Columba & monks.** A translation of Columba’s own poem with slight alterations.

*Scene v Iona 565*

**Song for Iona** Based on an old saying “Iona lays a blessing on every eye that sees it.”

**Ho, my heifer – Colman.** Taken from *Carmina Gadelica*.

**Sometimes in a lonely cell – Columba.** Based on a poem by Columba.

**Iona – reprise**

### ACT II

#### Scene i

*Inverness, months later*

#### Scene ii *Inverness,*

*some months later*

**Hillirinn ho ro – Domelch.** A spinning song, with the rhythm of a spindle or spinning wheel.

**Sometimes in a lonely cell – Columba and Domelch.** (reprise)

#### Scene iii

*Loch Ness, later*

**Tha mi dol dachaidh leat – Slave-girl.** Taken from *Carmina Gadelica*.

#### Interlude

**I sing of Wales – Mungo and the men**

*Scene iv Dunadd c.580*

*Scene v Dunadd 585*

**Aidan’s Lament – Domelch**

#### Scene vi

*On the way to Glasgow*

**I thank my God – Columba & Mungo**

*Scene vii Tara*

*Scene viii Iona 597*

**Iona – reprise**

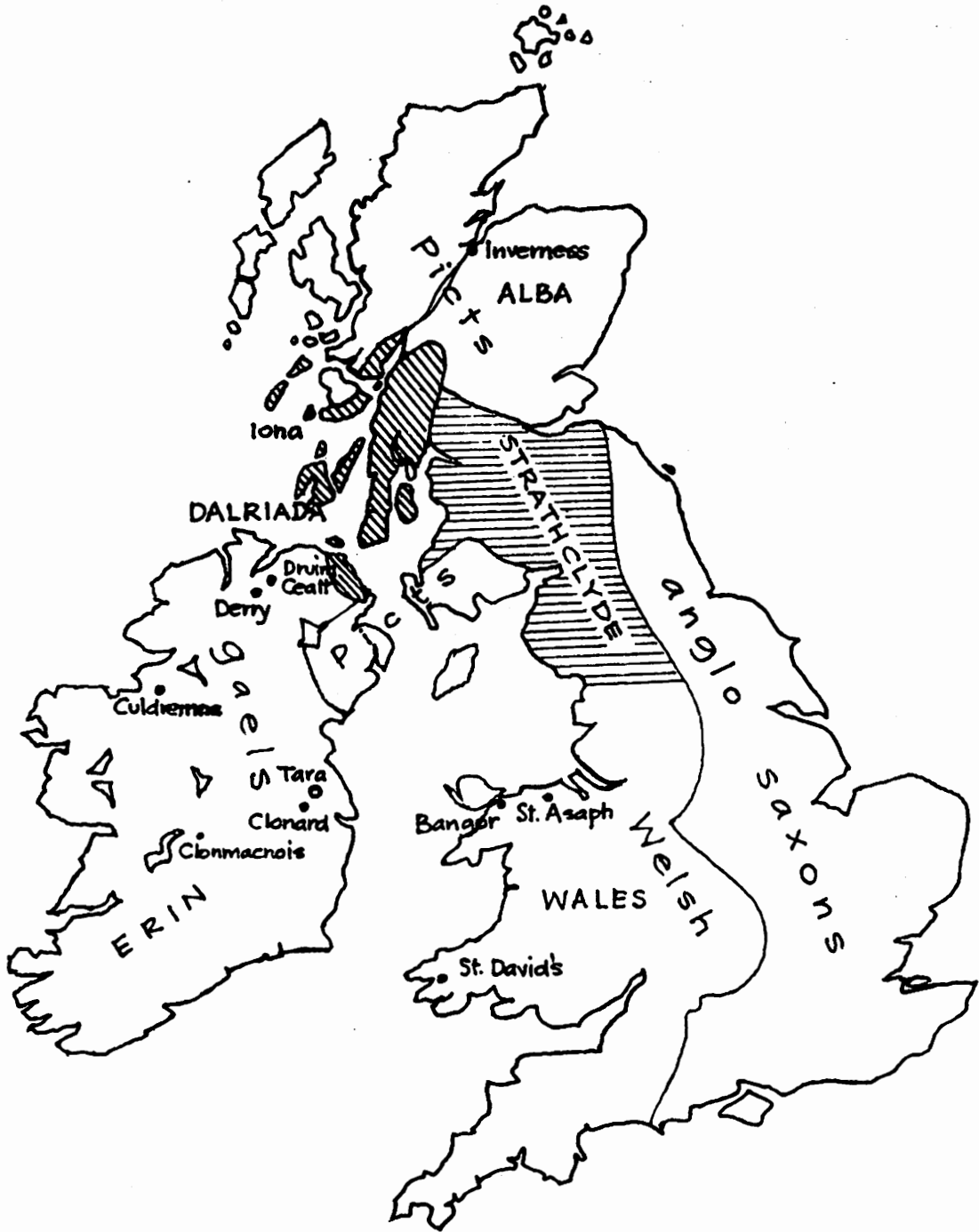
**Altus Prosator – the monks.** Written by Columba for Pope Gregory in thanks for his gifts.

#### Epilogue

**Song of the Peregrini – the company.** “Home is not a place, it’s a road to be travelled”, was said by Columbanus, an Irish monk who epitomises the spirit of the Peregrini. In his long life he and his followers founded 94 monasteries across Europe.

To the best of our knowledge this play is historically accurate. For the sake of simplicity we have left out many who had a part in the story, and occasionally altered the location of an event. Unfortunately there is not room to mention all the historical material incorporated in the dialogue, but the following notes may prove of interest.

- ACT I.i.** Kingship was hereditary as to family and elective as to the individual. A man from the royal family was chosen who was "most noble, experienced, wealthy, wise, learned, popular, free from blemish and best able to lead in battle." In practice it went to the man with the sharpest sword.  
The contemporary Irish record, the *Senchus Mor*, says "Retaliation prevailed in Ireland before Patrick brought forgiveness with him. Now no one is to be put to death for his crime as long as the blood fine is paid."  
"Be this soul on thine arm, O Christ" is taken from the *Carmina Gadelica*, a collection of hymns and incantations from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland translated by Alexander Carmichael (Scottish Academic Press).
- I.ii.** Twelve of the most outstanding monks from Clonard including Columba and Kenneth became known as the "Twelve Apostles" of Ireland.  
In this context King Arthur's death would be c.537 A.D.
- I.iii.** Columba was brought to trial for copying St. Jerome's Gospel without the owner's permission. It was a tradition among the Gaels that all scholarship was public property, but King Diarmid found against Columba. His verdict "To every cow its calf, to every book its copy," is well known today as the first law of copyright.  
"It will not be long before proud and mighty Tara becomes a desert . . ."  
Columba's prophecy came true when Diarmid was driven out by a hunger strike of monks and peasants.
- I.iv.** "We could not cast out the one whom God has chosen to lead the nations into life." was said by St. Brendan of Birr at the synod of Teltown.
- I.v.** These stories of Columba are taken from the "Life of St. Columba" written in 688 A.D. by Adamnan, ninth Abbot of Iona. Columba experimented with salmon breeding, bee keeping and the grafting of fruit trees.
- ACT II.i** The first recorded evidence of the Loch Ness monster is Columba's encounter with the "wurrum" described by Adamnan.
- II.ii.** Hostages were given by one king to another as a guarantee of friendship and were treated with honour and respect.  
"If you become Christ's man you will stumble on wonder upon wonder and every wonder true," was said by St. Brendan to King Brude.
- Interlude** The story of these Welsh is worthy of a play in itself. The monastery in North Wales from which Mungo set out for Scotland later became St. Asaph's.
- II.vi.** The present British royal family traces its descent from King Aidan.
- II.v.** There is considerable disagreement among historians as to the date of this battle between Aidan of Dalriada on the one side and the Maeatae Picts and the Saxons on the other (c.584-590).
- II.vii** The story of Columba and Bec macDe is traditional. "Man is like a sparrow who flies into a warm, lighted banqueting hall and then out again into the night," was said by a Saxon lord and quoted by Bede. The prayer is from the *Carmina Gadelica*.
- II.viii.** The "Song of Keening" was written when Columba died by Blind Dallen Forgaill, Chief Poet of Ireland.
- Epilogue** "How can we forget Ireland, where the sun of faith rose for us?" was said by the Abbot of Reichenau in the ninth century.



6th CENTURY A.D.

-  DALRIADA
-  STRATHCLYDE

## PROLOGUE

**Kenneth:** My name is Kenneth. I'm a Pictish monk from north-east Ireland. My father was a bard and I've always loved a good story. Tonight I'm going to tell you a story, with the help of a few friends. They will appear in many different guises – as kings, peasants, princesses, druids, warriors and monks.

The story begins fourteen hundred years ago, when Scotland, or Alba, was inhabited by the Picts. There were also some Picts in Ireland, or Erin. The Irish, who were called Scots, colonised Scotland, beginning in Dalriada, which today you know as Argyll. It was part of Irish Dalriada, now Antrim. Wales was divided into several kingdoms, and the people were called Britons. But there were also some Britons in Scotland, in Strathclyde. The real barbarians, a relative term, of course, were the Anglo-Saxons in the east. All these different tribes married each other, fought each other and grabbed each other's lands whenever they could. It was very confused and confusing! But all you need to remember is that we are going to talk about Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and in particular Strathclyde and Dalriada and about their peoples as the Irish, the Picts, the Welsh and the Anglo-Saxons.

Tonight we want you to experience a different world, a world where time moves slowly, where news travels in months rather than minutes. The people's names and their customs will be strange to you, but their struggles, their sorrows and their victories will not. So let's begin . . .

*(Kenneth is joined by the company singing)*

**Man:** Weep for the world;  
How black the night when every light has gone,  
How dark the days and months that are to come.

**All:** Weep for the world,  
Great cities sacked, beloved places burned;  
Hope bleeds to death, no staunching of the wound.

Weep for the world;  
Mobs rape and kill, and now the fall of Rome;  
The beacon light of all the world is gone.

**Woman:** I cannot pray;  
When sword is sheathed the plague creeps silently,  
My home a grave and day brings tragedy.

Oh, run and flee,  
But where to hide my child? Death stalks the shade,  
For Christ has died again and I'm afraid.

**Kenneth:** My heart is sick;  
Hope fails, but in the blackness of despair  
Shall flames of faith light up the darkness there,  
*All:* To light and lead us on?

*(Exit company)*

**Kenneth:** That was life at the beginning of the sixth century: nothing to live for except the present and little to hope for in the future. Invasions came in waves from the east and even in Ireland, so far away from the centre of things, we felt their ripples. That is the setting for the story I am going to tell you tonight. It's a true story and it has many heroes. The man at the heart of it was my greatest friend, Columba, or Colum as we called him. He was born in Ireland in 521.

*(Lights up on Eithne singing to her baby)*

**Eithne** Sleep my child, sleep sweetly,  
May the angels watch thee;  
Sleep my Colum, sleep my son,  
God will keep thee safely.

*(says)* When you were born, I had a dream –

I dreamed a cloak was given to me,  
The loveliest cloak I ever did see,  
The colours of a spring meadow,  
Its colours glowed alive and free.

But threads of darkness I could see,  
I wonder what they mean for thee?

Those colours of a spring meadow,  
The loveliest cloak I ever did see,  
A strong wind took it away from me,  
Till it spread afar over land and sea.

The colours of a spring meadow,  
The loveliest cloak, the loveliest cloak,  
The loveliest cloak I ever did see.

Dream my child, dream sweetly,  
Dream of future glory,  
Dream of mighty battles won,  
You shall be brave and mighty.

**Kenneth:** Colum grew up in Donegal. His mother, Princess Eithne, was from Leinster and his father was a Prince of the O’Niall dynasty. Ireland had many kings and most of the ruling families were related. It was from among these families that the High King was chosen and there was constant rivalry between them. The bitterest feuding was within the O’Niall dynasty itself. When Colum grew up his family, the Northern O’Niall, were allies of the Kings of Connaught.

## ACT I

### Scene (i)

*Connaught c.538. A feast in preparation; lights up on the young Prince Colum arriving. Princess Eithne waits to welcome her son. Bec macDe observes from a distance. Colum is greeted by his nurse, Deirdre – affectionate banter.*

**Colum:** Am I glad to be off that horse. Every bone in my body is aching!

**Deirdre:** And will you be watching the hurling tomorrow from your sickbed, then?

**Colum:** I will not! *(suddenly notices Bec macDe, who exits ostentatiously)* Who’s that?

**Deirdre:** That is Bec macDe, Arch Druid and chief adviser to King Diarmid of the Southern O’Niall.

**Colum:** Southern O’Niall! And what are they doing here in Connaught?

**Eithne:** *(stepping forward)* They’ve come for the feasting too. And are you not going to greet your own mother, who’s come all this way to meet you?

**Colum:** Mother! *(they greet each other)* You never seem to alter.

**Eithne:** Liar! Now let me look at you. My grown up son. You’ve certainly changed.

**Deirdre:** I wonder is it true, Princess Eithne, the rumours we hear, that they call him Columcille – church dove?

**Colum:** More respect from you, Deirdre; I’m a head taller than you now!

**Deirdre:** It’s a compliment I was meaning. They say that on the hurling field –

**Colum:** Ah, when it comes to a hurling match I’m in a class of my own!

**Eithne:** *(laughing)* Well, your skills will be put to the test tomorrow. There's to be a grand hurling match – against King Diarmit's party. *(motions to Deirdre, who fetches a magnificent cloak; while she is out of earshot . . .)*

**Colum:** Diarmit, Diarmit, I hear nothing but Diarmit all the time.

**Eithne:** I know. There's much talk of him as a future High King. He's scheming for it already. Now, I've got something for you. *(Deirdre spreads out the cloak)*

**Colum:** It's wonderful! *(they dress him in it; he struts about)* I look like a king myself in this.

**Eithne:** And why not, descended as you are from kings?

**Colum:** That's a lovely cross you're wearing. I've not seen it before.

**Eithne:** Do you like it? I've been keeping it for you. *(puts it round his neck)* Your great-grandfather wore it the day the Holy Patrick blessed him.

**Colum:** Patrick, who taught us to forgive instead of taking revenge. How wonderful to have been converted by Patrick himself.

**Eithne:** There is a prophecy, you know, that another greater than Patrick will come from our family.

**Colum:** I know.

**Eithne:** And what Ireland needs now, Colum, is a great Christian King, strong enough to unite us all.

**Colum:** I was waiting for that! I've been your High King since I was in my cradle.

**Eithne:** It's not just my dream. Others talk of it too. We planned your education for that, your father and I.

**Colum:** I know, mother.

**Eithne:** You have had the best Christian teaching in Ireland, all the laws and traditions of the Celts, as well as the scholarship of Rome.

**Colum:** You have given me the very best and I do want to use it for our people.

**Eithne:** Then let me be a little proud of you.

**Colum:** All right. But it's my life. And I will choose my own way.

*(Scream; enter slave-girl, rushes to Eithne)*

**Girl:** Help me, help me, they'll kill me!



**Eithne:** What's happened?

**Colum:** Who is she?

**Girl:** I'm a slave – King Diarmid's – I've run away – they're after me –  
*(Colum moves to help her; Deirdre restrains him)*

**Deirdre:** She belongs to Diarmid!

**Colum:** All the more reason to help her!

**Girl:** Don't let them find me!

**Eithne:** But what happened?

**Girl:** They caught me with my man. They killed him.

**Eithne:** What shall we do?

**Colum:** Come to the Cross. The Cross will give you sanctuary. *(She clings to him for protection, touching the cross around his neck)*

**Eithne:** But she's a pagan.

**Colum:** Sanctuary is for everyone.  
*(Enter Bec macDe)*

**Bec:** Princess Eithne – and this must be Prince Colum. I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before. I see you have caught the runaway slave. Diarmid will be indebted to you.

**Girl:** Don't let them take me. They'll kill me.

**Bec:** Of course, you will return her to her rightful owner, Princess Eithne.

**Eithne:** What will happen to her?

**Bec:** If you hand her over to me, I'll see that she is taken care of.

**Girl:** Have pity on me!

**Bec:** If you do not, I cannot answer for what may happen.  
*(Enter two warriors, thoroughly drunk; one carries leather bottle from which he drinks periodically)*

**1st warrior:** There she is!

**Colum:** She's in the sanctuary of the Church! (*tries to defend her, is knocked down; scuffle, shouting; Eithne turns on Bec*)

**Eithne:** Get out of here, and take Diarmit's drunkards with you! There's none loves Diarmit here in Connaught!

*(In the general confusion the girl is killed. Sudden silence)*

**Colum:** You killed her!

**1st warrior:** She got what she deserved.

**2nd warrior:** Sanctuary! The Cross didn't save her.

**Colum:** You swine! She was helpless!

**2nd warrior:** (*spits*) That's for your God.

**1st warrior:** Damn your Jesus, I say, and your Virgin.

**Colum:** Blasphemy, damn you!

**1st warrior:** They won't bring her back to life!

**Colum:** God curse you for murder!

**1st warrior:** Call on your God them. I'm not afraid of Him! (*lurches drunkenly, drinks from a leather bottle at his waist, chokes and collapses*)

**2nd warrior:** He cursed him. Did you hear what he said? Let's get out of here!

**Bec:** Fool! He was drunk, just like you are. He choked himself. Colum has no magic power. Take him away. (*indicating body; to Colum*) It is unwise to make an enemy of King Diarmit, Colum. He will not forget!

*(Exit Bec; warrior drags away body. Colum kneels beside the dead girl)*

**Colum:** Why, oh why? God forgive me. If only I could have saved you. God, make me strong to protect the weak, that no one may live in terror any longer in Ireland. (*He prays*)

Be this soul on thine own arm, O Christ,  
Thou King of the City of Heaven;  
Be it now on thine own right hand,  
Oh on thine own right hand . . .

*BLACK OUT*

Scene (ii)

*Clonard c.540–546. Abbot Finnian and all the monks, including Colum.*

**Kenneth:** Columba told me later that this incident was a turning point for him. The pledge he made then affected the rest of his life. It took him to Clonard, where I first met him.

*All sing:* Clonard, where the waters run,  
Where the fields of grain are growing;  
Clonard, where the young men come,  
Searching, longing, learning, knowing;  
Clonard on the banks of Boyne.

Here the Holy Abbot's teaching  
Fired the best and bravest minds;  
Discipline of prayer and preaching  
Forged a will to serve mankind.

Clonard, where the waters run (*repeat*)

**Kenneth:** People of every kind were welcome there, and more than three thousand of us built our wattle huts around the chapel on the river banks. During those happy years we made friends with the men we were to work with for the rest of our lives. Abbot Finnian of Clonard was one of the great teachers of the time. He was also our friend.

**Finnian:** (*as monks gather round him*) Welcome, all of you who have just arrived. You have come for many different reasons, drawn by the stories of what is happening here. I like to say that in Clonard we are a colony of Heaven here on earth. Now, none of us knows very much about Heaven, but we do know what the world is like; and we can learn by contrasts. Brothers, some of you drink only water, but quaff cups of hatred. Hatred is hell, heaven is love. Conscience is the eye of God in a man's soul. Let me say it again: conscience is the eye of God in a man's soul. Be honest about what you are really like. Evil thoughts shrivel when made public. Be a help to each other. Each person must have a friend he can talk with.

**Colum:** Eat only when hungry –

**Ciaran:** Sleep only when sleepy –

**Finnian:** Depression?

**Ciaran:** I strongly recommend joy!

**All:** Pray till the tears come, (sing as a round)  
Work till the sweat comes,  
For our own and others' needs;  
Pray till the tears come,  
Work till the sweat comes,  
Help your neighbour and give to the poor.

**Finnian:** And should God ask it, we vow to leave home and family and all that we hold most dear, for His Sake.

**All sing:** For we have come to seek the meaning  
Of man's life upon the earth;  
And the truth is worth the gleaning  
That God's kingdom come to birth.

Clonard, where the waters run (*repeat*)

(*Exeunt monks, leaving Abbot Finnian and Colum*)

**Colum:** Abbot Finnian, if you can spare me a few moments, I want to talk to you. I need your advice.

**Finnian:** What's the problem? Not your studies, I'm sure. In the years you've been here, you have learned all I have to teach you. Someone else you can't get on with?

**Colum:** Not this time! This is a problem of – destiny, you might say.

**Finnian:** Now, that's different. But problems of destiny often turn out to be problems of human nature, whether you're a prince or a carpenter, my son.

**Colum:** Well, you know my nature better than anyone, Abbot Finnian, and I would be glad of your advice.

**Finnian:** Don't forget, advice and truth aren't always easy to accept, especially for princes. But I have been praying about your future, too.

**Colum:** My cousins of the Northern O'Niall have told me that if I were to agree to it, they would put forward my claim to be High King of Ireland.

**Finnian:** That's a big decision.

**Colum:** The Southern O'Niall are working to have King Diarmid elected. He has been scheming for it for years and his power is growing. The Druid, Bec macDe, has his ear and if he's elected the pagan influence will increase.

**Finnian:** I don't suppose your Christian cousins in the North would accept him easily, would they?

**Colum:** Exactly! And I'm afraid of what might follow. It's always the innocent who suffer. Abbot, I once pledged my life to their protection. Now I could have the power to do it; to establish justice in Ireland, to enforce the Church's right of sanctuary. Abbot Finnian, is this my chance?

**Finnian:** What do you think yourself?

**Colum:** First I think one way and then another!

**Finnian:** When I was a young man studying in David's monastery in Wales, I wanted to go to Rome and become a great and famous scholar. But David said to me: "What is the purpose in scholarship if you are not training anyone else?" I went to pray, and God spoke to me: "All you would find in Rome will be given to you here. Go and renew the faith in Ireland after Patrick." So I came here to Clonard. Thousands have flocked here. You have come, Columcille, and Kenneth and Ciaran, and others who are now your friends.

**Colum:** But why was it wrong for you to go to Rome?

**Finnian:** I was ambitious. I wanted to serve God in my way. But God wants us to serve Him in His way. And in this case, His way and mine were different! I have no advice for you Colum. But ask yourself this. Are you mostly concerned with your own future? Do the people around you grow to full stature or do they shrink in your shadow?

**Colum:** I've never thought of that.

**Finnian:** Well, you must think of it. You will never do anything for Ireland alone. Some men must govern, but they are not necessarily the ones whose influence is decisive. One day, Columcille, this land will glitter with saints as numerous as the stars, and they will do more for the people of Ireland than any king.

*(Lights dim on Finnian; Colum comes forward to pray)*

**Colum:** Purity, wisdom and prophecy,  
*(sings)* These are the gifts I would ask of Thee,  
O High King of Heaven, grant them to me.

The lamp of the body is purity,  
And those that have it their God shall see,  
For the pure in heart know how to love,  
And I have longed my love to prove.

This is the gift I would ask of Thee,  
O Lord of my manhood, bestow it on me.

Your wisdom I pray for, a light for the mind,  
And those that seek it shall surely find  
The way in which to serve and lead;  
My people are lost and a shepherd need.

The gift of the soul is prophecy;  
Enlarge my vision that I might see  
The past and the present and future as one  
That here on this earth Thy will be done.

Purity, wisdom and prophecy,  
These are the gifts I would ask of Thee;  
O High King of Heaven, grant them to me.

*(Lights up again as monks, including Colum, gather round Finnian)*

- Finnian:** This is a century of convulsion, my sons. The world has seen nothing like it since Rome had an empire. An age is dying. But in the ruins of the old you are called on to build the new. The Roman soldiers have gone; you will be soldiers for Christ.
- Kenneth:** You have great faith in us, Abbot. We're just ordinary people.
- Ciaran:** Columcille may have influence. He's a prince. But I'm only a carpenter. I don't even have any books of my own.
- Finnian:** But I thought you had a copy of St Matthew's Gospel. When I last talked to you, you were learning that.
- Laisran:** He gave it to me, Abbot Finnian. I asked if I could borrow it. I didn't know it was his only one, and he insisted on giving it to me.
- Ciaran:** Well, the trouble was, I had just read: "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, so do to them."
- Kenneth:** Poor old Half-Matthew! *(They laugh)* We call him Half-Matthew because he's only learnt the first half!
- Finnian:** Call him Half-Ireland, for half Ireland will follow his example. Ciaran, are you still jealous of Colum?
- Ciaran:** So you knew! I have been; but I had a dream, Colum. All my carpentry tools were laid out in front of me. I thought I had made a big sacrifice in giving up my trade to be a monk. But a voice said to me: "These tools are all you have sacrificed to God; but Colum has sacrificed the sceptre of Ireland."

*(Monks look at Colum in awe. In the silence King Rhydderch enters)*

**Rhydderch:** I am looking for Finnian, Abbot of Clonard.

**Finnian:** Yes?

**Rhydderch:** I am Rhydderch of Strathclyde.

**Finnian:** Rhydderch? King of the Northern Britons?

**Rhydderch:** A king, did you say? Indeed, when King Arthur died ten years ago it fell to me to hold the northern tribes together. But we can never learn to unite. I have no kingdom now. The Christian party is scattered and destroyed.

**Finnian:** What has happened?

**Rhydderch:** A month ago in a great battle we met the Saxons and Picts and other traitors with them. They tore us to pieces. Now the pagans are let loose across the North. The villages in their path are charred remains and their people slaves. Monasteries are burning and their books and treasures are fuel for the barbarian campfires. Monks and priests are murdered wherever they are found.

**Finnian:** What about your own Bishop, Mungo?

**Rhydderch:** He has managed to escape to Wales. David's monastery there stands like a rock while dark waves beat around it.

**Finnian:** And what are you going to do?

**Rhydderch:** I shall find a welcome here with my mother's family. I need time to think and plan.

**Colum:** Do you have news of Scottish Dalriada and my cousin the King?

**Rhydderch:** Scottish Dalriada! The Picts are pressing in on every side. It's a tiny colony in a sea of pagans.

**Finnian:** We had heard nothing of all this.

**Rhydderch:** A grim picture, Abbot. The tide that ebbed when King Arthur died is now far out. Your merciful Christ, and mine, is being swept away with it. Nothing but the memory of a gentler way of life will be left for our children.

### *BLACK OUT*

**Kenneth:** The news of this disaster ended our life at Clonard. The preparation was over. The main strongholds of Christianity were now in Ireland and we decided together to go on the offensive. Finnian sent us out to found new monasteries. Ciaran founded the abbey at Clonmacnois. Two years later, in 548, the dreaded yellow plague finally reached Ireland. Our dear old Abbot Finnian died, and so did Ciaran, who was only



thirty-six. So few of our community were left that we decided to disperse in the hope that some would survive. I went to Wales. Columba went home to Donegal. His cousin the King gave him land on the site of an old fort in the oak forest of Derry. There he founded his first monastery; it was always his favourite . . .

**Colum:**  
*(sings)* Derry mine, my small oak grove,  
My small cell, my home and my love;  
Oh, thou Lord of lasting life,  
Woe to him who brings it strife.

Mo Dhoire, mo dhaireagan,           *(Irish Gaelic)*  
Mo áras is m'aireglan;  
A Dhé, bhi fuil thuas ar neamh,  
Is maing do ghni a sárúghadh.

**Kenneth:** Over the next ten years the influence of the monasteries increased steadily. So did the enmity between the two branches of the O'Niall dynasty. Diarmid of the Southern O'Niall became High King at Tara, with Bec macDe, the Arch Druid, as his closest adviser. The greatest figure of the Northern O'Niall was Columba. He was by now not only Abbot of Derry but founder of Durrow, Kells, Lambay, Swords and many other monasteries all over Ireland. In 560 King Diarmid held a great festival at Tara. All Ireland gathered to celebrate. At the same time a dispute involving Columba was brought before the High King for judgment. The outcome was debated with passionate interest. Eventually Diarmid's verdict went against the Abbot. It was a controversial decision and feelings ran high at the royal games which followed. Curnan, Prince of Connaught, led a team of Columba's kinsmen against King Diarmid's followers in a great hurling match . . .

### Scene (iii)

*Tara 560; a windswept hill overlooking the hurling field; two peasants watch the match.*

**Man:** There's a good view from up here, wife.

**Woman:** It would have been better down by the goal.

**Man:** It would not!

**Woman:** It would so. In this wind we'll probably be blown down the hill anyway.

**Man:** *(wetting his finger to test wind)* Let me see, the wind's going this way.

**Woman:** It is not, it's going that way.

**Man:** Quiet, woman, I can't concentrate! Now, if Prince Curnan wins the toss, he'll play with the wind behind him.

**Woman:** And all we'll be seeing is their backs. We'd have been better down by the goal.

**Man:** Be quiet, woman, they're starting. They're off! Come on!

**Woman:** That's it! Knock him down! I think Prince Curnan's side'll win.

**Man:** Oh, did you see that? Careful, man.

**Woman:** Curnan's father, the King of Connaught, now he was a player.

**Man:** Much you know about it. Colum, he was the greatest ever – until he turned monkish.

**Woman:** Now he was a lovely young boy, so he was. So handsome. Come on, get him!

**Man:** That's it, go on! They say Abbot Colum was coaching young Curnan.

**Woman:** Then Curnan's side will surely win.

**Man:** King Diarmid won't like that.

**Woman:** And why not?

**Man:** Because Abbot Colum is Curnan's guardian, stupid woman!

**Woman:** Oh, that's how it is.

**Man:** You should have been at the trial this morning. There'll be trouble before the day's out. And all that for a book.

**Woman:** Did Abbot Colum really copy that book without permission?

**Man:** Well, the King found him guilty, didn't he? "To every cow its calf, to every book its copy", that was the verdict.

**Woman:** What I say is, why shouldn't a book be copied? Books and learning are supposed to belong to everybody.

**Man:** Wife, you know nothing about it. I was there. Oh, but you should have seen the Abbot's face, black as thunder it was. Yes, yes, come on, come on!

**Woman:** It's a shame, that's what I say. The Abbot is a lovely man.

**Man:** A goal, a goal!

**Woman:** What, where, who scored?

**Man:** Curnan, Curnan, Prince Curnan! (*leaping up and down, so excited that he fails to notice what happens next on the field*)

**Woman:** Oh, he hit him.

**Man:** What, where? Who hit him?

**Woman:** No, no, you fool. Curnan, Curnan hit him. Look, look!

**Man:** He did not – oh, he's not moving.

**Woman:** He must be dead. Mother of God, Curnan's smashed that boy's head in!

**Man:** He is dead. Look at the blood.

**Woman:** I can't look.

**Man:** The soldiers – here they come –

**Woman:** They're after Curnan. Oh, don't look, I can't watch –

**Man:** Get off me, woman, I want to see. There's Abbot Colum. He's giving Curnan sanctuary –

**Woman:** The soldiers!

**Man:** They're dragging Curnan away from the Abbot –

**Woman:** Heaven have mercy on him!

**Man:** The Druid's saying something . . . They're making a circle round Curnan . . . (*both groan and hide their faces*) Holy Jesus! They're shouting for the Abbot.

**Woman:** They wouldn't kill him too.

**Man:** He's gone. I can't see him anywhere.

**Woman:** Did he escape?

**Man:** Don't be a fool, wife, how could he escape?

(*Enter Colum, distraught and breathless*)

**Woman:** Look, there he is.

**Man:** The Abbot himself! (*They rush to help him*) Abbot Colum, are you all right?

**Woman:** Do you think they followed him?

**Man:** He's not safe here.

**Colum:** They killed him, they killed him. Curnan, dear Curnan, and I could do nothing.

**Woman:** They'll look everywhere for him. What shall we do?

**Man:** There's no time to lose, we'll take him home.

**Woman:** What if they find him there?

**Man:** Quickly Abbot –

**Colum:** Thank you, but I must go to Connaught and tell Curnan's father the news myself. And then home to Donegal.

*(Enter Bec macDe)*

**Colum:** Bec macDe!

**Bec:** I followed you. Did you think you could escape me?

**Colum:** What do you want?

**Bec:** This is the end, Colum, for you and for your Church. The people are turning against you.

**Colum:** Listen to me, Bec macDe. A prince was killed today, a boy under my protection. Blood will soak Ireland for this day's work. Diarmid will answer for it!

**Bec:** You hate Diarmid because he found against you in the trial.

**Colum:** His judgment was biased! You know very well the Church does not recognise Diarmid's authority in these matters.

**Bec:** Diarmid has brought justice to Ireland!

**Colum:** Justice! There was no justice for Curnan!

**Bec:** It is a crime to kill at the Royal Games. Diarmid had his own son executed for less.

**Colum:** Curnan's father would have paid the blood fine. Diarmid knew that. And his soldiers broke the sanctuary of the Church.

**Bec:** The only sanctuary in Ireland is the King's justice. The Church must submit.

**Colum:** The Church will never submit!

**Bec:** You are too powerful, Colum. You speak in the name of your Church but this time you Northern O’Niall will learn who is master in Ireland.

**Colum:** Master in Ireland! Tell King Diarmid this: it will not be long before proud and mighty Tara becomes a desert. It is the penalty of his acts that Tara shall stand empty for ever!

**Bec:** Flee if you can, Colum. Diarmid has ordered your arrest!

*BLACK OUT*

**Scene (iv)**

*Ulster c.562. Crescendo of cheering and sounds of troops preparing for battle. Colum walks down the line of troops carrying the Cathach (Psalter written in Columba’s own hand). He prays for victory in battle.*

**Colum:** A Dhia na bhFeart, a’Ardri na rithe, cumdaigh do mhuintir, le linn  
lúbarnaíl an chomhraic. Deonaigh, a Dhia, go mbéarfaidh do sheirbhíseach  
an bua leis. *(Irish Gaelic)*  
O mighty God, High King of Kings, shield thy people in the twistings of the fight.  
May thy servants triumph!

*(In another part of the stage, Eithne sings)*

**Eithne:** Bloody the battle and countless the men  
*(sings)* That fell on the field of Culdremne  
For the Northern O’Niall, with Connaught as one  
Defeated the Druids and victory won,  
They vanquished King Diarmid to avenge a dead son,  
In the name of High King of Heaven.

*(says)* And were we not right to do so? King Diarmid raised the southern clans to crush the north; now the Christians need never fear the pagans’ power again.

*(sings)* Yes, bloody the battle, for thousands were slain  
From the South on the fields of Culdremne;  
The pagans were routed, defeated their side,  
Yet only one man from the Northern side died,  
And long was the feasting in glory and pride  
And praise to the High King of Heaven.

*(says)* But Colum . . . He should have rejoiced with us. The victory has brought him no joy. The Church, his fellow monks, seem to blame him for all the lives lost. But could he ever have stopped the North from rising or restrained the King of Connaught after

Curnan's murder? There is a blackness in his spirit as if he feels the guilt as well. They say he is proud. He has reason to be proud. I am proud, proud of my son.

*(Lights up on Colum kneeling in front of Laisran in another part of the stage)*

**Laisran:** You have dragged the Church of Christ into a dynastic power struggle – your family feud, Colum.

**Colum:** I saw the chance to crush the pagans once and for all.

**Laisran:** You saw the chance to crush the pagans! You have exploited other men's passions to achieve what you thought were God's ends. Who are you to play God in this country?

**Colum:** But I –

**Laisran:** This time you will listen! Your hatred of Diarmid and Bec macDe has blinded you to your own ambition and you are too proud to face it. Our task is far greater, Colum. It is to build a new society within the shell of the old. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We wrestle for the soul of every man – have you forgotten?

**Colum:** The Bishops wanted to excommunicate me. Why was it not done?

**Laisran:** We could not cast out the one whom God has chosen to lead the nations into life.

*(Lights up on Eithne, alone; Colum enters during next speech)*

**Eithne:** Oh, Colum, my son, I dreamed I did see  
Dark threads in a cloak of colours;  
And the wind blew that cloak away from me,  
Over the islands and far out to sea;  
Oh, what do they mean, those dark threads for thee,  
In that garment of many colours?

**Colum:** Mother, you're talking to yourself.

**Eithne:** Colum!

**Colum:** I've come to talk with you, mother. There are many things you must know.

**Eithne:** I'm glad you have come. You have been troubled and so have I.

**Colum:** I am to blame for the people killed at Culdremne.

**Eithne:** How can you say that – it's not true!

**Colum:** It is true. I could have stopped the clans from rising for me. I know I could. You know I could. But I did not.

**Eithne:** It will do you no good to think about it.

**Colum:** For months I ran away from the truth. But at last I have faced it. I have no pride left and I am at peace. My vow was to be God's servant, but in my heart I was first a son of the Northern O'Niall. Mother, nothing is left. Everything is destroyed.

**Eithne:** Are you not proud of the Christian kings and their great victory?

**Colum:** I serve another King and I have betrayed Him.

**Eithne:** You mean the High King of Heaven!

**Colum:** All those children without a father, those women alone. I have walked in their villages. What could I do? In the name of God, what have I done?

**Eithne:** I have no King.

**Colum:** Have you not, mother?

**Eithne:** Oh, Colum, you have always been my High King.

**Colum:** I know, mother, and you have been no help to me.

**Eithne:** *(pause)* Your King . . . He should have been my King. But I put Him in second place. I have wanted power and influence for you. And I have gloried in your ascending star.

**Colum:** There is a part of my vow I have never fulfilled. "To leave home and family and all I hold most dear – "

**Eithne:** No –

**Colum:** I am going away from Ireland.

**Eithne:** No!

**Colum:** Our kinsmen in Scottish Dalriada have asked for help. The Picts are attacking them on every side. There are no churches left and they have lost heart. I am going to found a monastery there.

**Eithne:** Going away, leaving Derry? Oh, Colum . . .

**Colum:** My penance is to win as many men for Christ as fell on the fields of Culdremne. It will be a new beginning, mother. *(exit)*



Eithne:

And the wind blew that cloak away from me,  
Over the islands and far out to sea;  
Those shadows, were they for you or for me?  
Colum, dear son, you are leaving me.

*BLACK OUT*

*(Re-enter Colum and monks; they paddle an imaginary boat as they sing)*

O Son of my God, what a pride, what a pleasure  
To plough the blue sea,  
The waves of the fountain of deluge to measure  
Dear Erin, to thee.

Those things I am leaving behind me, the very  
Most dear that I know,  
Tir Leidach and Durrow and Derry, I'm leaving  
Alas, I must go.

In Derry, sweet Derry, the cattle are lowing  
At earliest dawn;  
On the brink of the summer the pigeons are cooing  
And doves on the lawn.

The sound of the wind in the elms like the strings of  
A harp being played,  
The note of the blackbird that claps with the wings of  
Delight in the glade.

Alas for the voyage the High King of Heaven  
Enjoined upon me,  
For the lands of the Picts must be won to Christ's calling  
There over the sea.

So with prayers and with courage we brothers set sail  
For Alba the fair,  
Half of my blessing for Picts and half for the Gael  
In Erin so dear.

Scene (v)

*Iona 565. Scene opens with singing.*

Iona, Iona, Iona,  
The seagulls crying,  
Wheeling, flying  
O'er the rain-washed bay;  
Iona, Iona,  
The soft breeze sighing,  
The waves replying  
On a clear, blue day,  
Iona.

Iona lays a blessing on every eye that sees it,  
With peace each soul caressing as if to calm and please it;  
Ion's benediction on every soul that leaves it.

Iona, Iona, Iona,  
The wild winds whipping,  
Comfort stripping  
With the gale's chill sword;  
Iona, Iona,  
The waters glisten,  
The wild winds listen  
To the voice of our Lord;  
Iona.

Iona's blessing strengthens and firmly it will hold you;  
Then from this rocky fortress goes forth the island soldier;  
May Christ who calmed the tempest with safety now enfold you.  
Iona, Iona, Iona.

*(Lights up on Colum at prayer; a creaky old voice is heard as Colman enters singing, followed by Lugbe)*

**Colman:**  
*(sings)*

Ho, my heifer, heifer, heifer!  
Ho, my heifer, kindly, calm.  
Ho, my heifer, gentle, gentler,  
Thou art the love of thy mother.

Columba will give to her progeny,  
God will give to her grass;  
My heifer will give her milk to me  
And her female calf.

Ho, my heifer, heifer, heifer!  
Ho, my heifer, kindly, calm –

*(Colman catches sight of Colum and interrupts his prayers unceremoniously)*

Abbot Colum! May God bless you!

**Colum:** Colman, my friend!

**Colman:** It's been a long time since you visited our poor home, Abbot. The children never stop asking for you.

**Colum:** And what brings you to Iona?

**Colman:** Well, it's the cows again.

**Colum:** Not more problems? Have my pirate kinsmen been after your herd again?

**Colman:** They wouldn't dare, not since you cursed them.

**Colum:** I did not curse them! How many times do I have to tell you? I merely gave them God's truth and tried to persuade them not to live by plundering your farm.

**Lugbe:** I'm not sure they appreciated your persuasion, Abbot, especially when you waded right out to their boat. Llamh Deas, the pirate, blames you for the storm which drowned his brother. He thinks you should have been on their side, because you are related –

**Colman:** Instead of defending the rights of a poor, unimportant, Pictish farmer like me!

**Lugbe:** Exactly! Which is why the pirates tried to kill you.

**Colman:** Kill you?

**Colum:** Never mind about that now. What's the matter with your cows?

**Colman:** Well, it's like this. I have too many now.

**Colum:** Too many?

**Colman:** Your prophecy was that they would increase to 105. Well, there are now 110. So I have brought you the extra five. It wouldn't do for the Abbot's prophecy to be wrong!

**Colum:** Well, thank you, Colman! Talking of animals, Lugbe, how is our traveller from Ireland? Is she better yet?

**Lugbe:** You mean the heron with the broken wing –

**Colman:** A heron? Those birds bring bad luck!

**Colum:** The power of Christ is stronger than luck and magic, Colman. You have nothing to be afraid of. Come, let me bless you. *(In Scottish Gaelic, as Colman kneels) Beannachd Dhé maille riut (During the blessing Colman makes the sign against the evil eye, as in V for victory, but using the index and little fingers)* You really don't need to do that now that you're a Christian!!

**Colman:** Och, I know, Abbot. Still, it's always safer to take precautions.

**Colum:** You Picts! You're all the same.

**Colman:** Aye, but we never forget a good turn. Remember, Abbot, my family is your family. If ever we can do anything for you –

**Colum:** I'll bear it in mind. God go with you, Colman . . . Oh, tell me – do you have any relations at the court of King Brude?

**Colman:** Brude, High King of the Picts? Why, of course. My wife's nephew's father-in-law's cousin is Keeper of the Gates. Why?

**Colum:** Keeper of the Gates, eh? That could be useful . . . Mmm *(lost in thought; exit Colman, puzzled. Enter a woman)*

**Woman:** You sent for me, Abbot?

**Colum:** What? Oh, yes, yes, I did. You're the oarsman's wife, aren't you. Your husband came to see me.

**Woman:** He's not my husband!

**Colum:** But he is your husband! You have been made one in holy matrimony.

**Woman:** Don't make me, Abbot! I hate him, I hate him!

**Colum:** But why?

**Woman:** I don't know. Oh, but I do. He's so ugly, I can't bear him. Oh, Abbot Colum, you must help me. I'll do anything you tell me. I'll even become a nun. But I can't, I won't live with that man!

**Colum:** Calm yourself, my dear. I have a suggestion. Let us all three, you, your husband and me, fast for one day – until sundown tonight – and we will pray and ask God for His help.

**Woman:** What good will that do?

**Colum:** I don't know. We shall see. Are you willing?

**Woman:** Very well, if you say so, Abbot. But it won't make any difference. (*yell from off-stage*) Heaven preserve us, what's that?

(*Enter a distraught monk, Genereus, shrouded in a veil, pursued by imaginary bees; he starts shouting offstage*)

**Genereus:** I'll take no more, d'you hear?

**Woman:** A brother, gone mad! (*exit hastily*)

**Genereus:** A cook I may be, but a cook's job is not to look after wild bees! No, not even for you, Abbot –

**Colum:** But Genereus, it's only an experiment. You know we would get much more honey if we could only domesticate the bees.

**Genereus:** Domesticate bees! Whoever heard of such a thing? Look (*shows stings*) look! A curse on your experiments, I say, and on your bees. They be Pictish bees! (*exit pursued by bees*)

**Colum:** Genereus doesn't seem to like his new responsibilities very much, does he?

**Lugbe:** I don't think they like him very much either!

**Colum:** I meant to ask him to kill one of Colman's cows for dinner tonight – (*yell from offstage*) but perhaps this isn't the best moment . . . Dear Genereus, our one Saxon brother. He must be lonely sometimes. We must look after him, Lugbe. One day he will take Christ's message to his people.

**Lugbe:** But why cook a special dinner? We aren't expecting anyone, and look, there's a storm blowing up. Nobody will cross in that.

**Colum:** We shall have a holy man with us tonight.

**Lugbe:** Is it true then, Abbot? Do you have the Gift? Do you have the Second Sight?

**Colum:** Can you keep a secret?

**Lugbe:** Of course I can.

**Colum:** There are a few on whom God has bestowed the gift of seeing distinctly the whole circle of the world, with the scope of the mind miraculously enlarged.

**Lugbe:** But why keep it secret? It's wonderful. You could –

**Colum:** First to avoid boasting, and second to avoid intolerable crowds!

*(Lugbe withdraws, leaving Colum alone on stage; he stands, as it were, in a pool of silence, and sings. This contemplative song is the key to Columba's whole life and the heart of the play)*

**Colum:** Sometimes, in a lonely cell  
In the presence of my God  
I stand and listen.

In the silence of my heart  
I can hear Him well  
When I listen.

Despairing people flock to me,  
They expect that I can see  
The answers.

They ask my advice,  
They say I am wise;  
I answer  
That nothing can deceive me  
If I stand alone and silently  
Listen.

For I am but a servant  
Who is guided by his King  
When I listen.

Sometimes, in a lonely cell  
In the presence of my God  
I stand and listen.

In the silence of my heart  
I can hear Him well  
When I listen.

*(Lights fade and come up again on Colum, alone, waiting; enter Kenneth; he pauses and after a moment Colum turns and sees him)*

**Colum:** Kenneth!

**Kenneth:** Columcille! You're just the same – not even very much older.

**Colum:** You got my message? I had a feeling you would arrive today, although it was almost too early to expect you.

**Kenneth:** It's quite a journey up here from South Wales! But everyone thought I should leave at once. I have so many messages for you – from David, and from Mungo too. Oh, I hope you'll meet one day. There's so much to tell you –

**Colum:** And plenty of time to tell it in. Lugbe! Lugbe! You must be tired and hungry, Kenneth. (*Enter Lugbe, astonished at the visitor's arrival*) Ah, Lugbe, will you bring some food for our guest? (*Exit Lugbe*)

**Kenneth:** What a place this is! The peace, the order, and the farming – all this in only two years. You know, Columcille, already Iona is a lantern of hope in a dark world.

**Colum:** It's just the beginning. We still have no permanent tenure. King Brude could snuff out that 'lantern' any time he chose.

**Kenneth:** Now, unless I'm very much mistaken, you had some reason for asking me to come, didn't you?

**Colum:** I might have known you'd guess! We're surrounded by hostile Picts, Kenneth.

**Kenneth:** So you called in a Pict! But I'm not from these parts.

**Colum:** I know. But you always loved an adventure.

**Kenneth:** True. What do you have in mind?

**Colum:** To win King Brude for Christ.

**Kenneth:** What? Brude? You can't be serious. He's the most powerful and ruthless king the Picts have ever had. Why, it's only four years since he seized half of Dalriada and killed your cousin the King.

**Colum:** Which is why we must win him. It's the only way to open up the Pictish territory to Christianity. We must have his support if our work is to last. Besides, he's constantly attacking Dalriada and carrying off the people as slaves and hostages. They can never hope to defend themselves against such a powerful enemy.

**Kenneth:** But we'd have to go to Inverness!

**Colum:** I know.

**Kenneth:** It would be suicide! Brude has spies all the way up the Great Glen. And if we did manage to get there, there's that old Druid, Broichan, his fosterfather; the gates would be bolted and barred.

**Colum:** We'll see about that! (*Enter Lugbe with a tray of food for two*) But come and eat. You must be starving. No, I won't eat, Lugbe. Remember, I'm fasting today.



**Lugbe:** There's a message from the oarsman's wife, Abbot, the one who came to see you this morning. She says that everything's all right. She doesn't need to become a nun. She doesn't know how it happened, but yesterday she hated her husband and now she loves him! So I think you can break your fast, Abbot. *(They laugh)*

**Colum:** It may be a good omen for our journey. Think of it – the chance to bring new life to a whole people. You know their customs, Kenneth. They live in darkness and terror. Just think if what is beginning to grow here could reach out across the land. I've thought about it for months!

*(As Columba speaks, a reprise of "Iona" begins softly; at the end of his speech volume of song increases so that the words of the last four lines can be heard as the monks exeunt)*

Iona, Iona, Iona,  
The seagulls crying,  
Rain-squalls dying  
As the currachs sail;  
Iona, Iona,  
Through tide and weather  
Set forth together  
In the teeth of the gale;  
Iona.

## INTERVAL

## ACT II

### Scene (i)

*Inverness, some months later; music and noise of a feast; on stage a serving woman and a fisherman who is recounting to her a dramatic tale; enter King Brude, followed by Domelch and Broichan who is attended by a terrified slavegirl.*

**Brude:** What is going on? Why have we been disturbed?

**Domelch:** Yes, and in the middle of my feast!

**Woman:** He brings news of the monks and King Brude must hear it.

**Broichan:** Who is this fool – he's nothing but a fisherman!

**Fisherman:** Oh, terrible, they were, terrible!

**Broichan:** Monks, monks! Meddling in people's private lives; peddling their emasculated gods!

**Brude:** Well, come on, out with it.

**Fisherman:** Oh, what is to become of us? Terrible, they were, terrible, terrible!

**Brude:** The castle gates are bolted, man. It would take more than a few monks to get in here.

**Domelch:** I can't understand why you all make so much fuss.

**Woman:** They have great magic powers, princess.

**Broichan:** The spirits of the elements that I serve are enraged at this intrusion, Brude. They will have their revenge. I have called up the spirits of the Loch to ensnare these monks.

**Domelch:** How terrifying.

**Broichan:** A great monster will arise in Loch Ness and devour them!

**Domelch:** A test of strength, how exciting!

**Brude:** You keep out of this.

**Domelch:** But, Grandfather, I'm getting quite curious. Why not let them in?

**Broichan:** The Princess Domelch should take care or she will be entangled in things beyond her understanding.

**Domelch:** (*slightly alarmed*) You daren't touch me! Anyway, it would be interesting to meet a really great magician.

**Brude:** Domelch, you don't know what you're talking about. Since these monks have been in Iona, Dalriada has taken new heart. Abbot Colum's influence is spreading, even among our own Picts. And besides, Colum is not only a monk, he's also a great Irish prince.

**Domelch:** All the more reason to receive him!

**Woman:** King Brude, this man must tell his story.

**Fisherman:** Oh, it was terrible to behold! A monster rose out of the deeps. As these strangers in their curragh approached the shore near our village the wurrum rose out of the deeps! It seized one of the oarsmen and plucked him overboard.

**Domelch:** And then?

**Fisherman:** It dragged him down, down into the icy waters, and he was screaming, "Sweet Jesus, Holy Mary, save me, save me!" And then a huge man stood up in the curragh and he spake to the creature and the wurrum dropped the man and he disappeared.

**Domelch:** The man?

**Fisherman:** No, princess, the wurrum!

**Domelch:** So much for your spell, Broichan.

**Slave:** *(catching sight of Colum and Kenneth in the distance)* The monks! The monks!

**Woman:** They've nearly reached the castle! They're climbing the last slope!

**Fisherman:** Oh, what will become of us? Like giants they are, and so many of them.

**Woman:** They do say that when the Abbot curses a man he drops down dead.

**Fisherman:** They say he can look into your heart and see all your secrets.

**Domelch:** Oh dear!

**Woman:** They say he makes you do things you don't want to do and you do them willingly!

**Broichan:** Who says these things?

**Woman:** My cousin has a relation who –

**Brude:** Enough! You all talk too much. I told you, did I not, the castle gates are closed!

**Domelch:** Oh, Grandfather, do let them in!

**Brude:** Domelch –

**Domelch:** Oh, please, it is my feast day – *(general hubbub, for and against)*

**Brude:** Silence, the lot of you!!!

*(Enter Colum and Kenneth; there is a stunned silence)*

**Colum:** Brude, High King of the Picts, my deepest respects to you and your people. We have travelled a long way to meet you.

**Brude:** How the devil did you get in?

**Colum:** Through the gates, King Brude.  
**Brude:** Through the gates?  
**Colum:** They were opened wide to welcome us!

*BLACK OUT*

**Scene (ii)**

*Inverness, some months later: Domelch alone; Colum enters unseen by Domelch who is singing a spinning song.*

**Domelch:**  
*(sings)*

I will spin me a fortune so bold and so sweet,  
Oh, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o  
Come, count the brave heroes who fall at my feet,  
Oh, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o  
The one I shall choose is a warrior king,  
And how he shall love me to sing  
Oh, hillirinn hillirinn ho ro ho ro, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o.

And oh, I would spin me a destiny great,  
Oh, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o  
Say, where are they spun from, the threads of our fate?  
Oh, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o  
What fortune is spinning for me and my king?  
Come spin me the song we shall sing,  
Oh, hillirinn hillirinn ho ro ho ro, hillirinn ho ro hu ri-o.

*(Colum joins in the last line; Domelch is startled and slightly embarrassed)*

**Domelch:** Oh, Abbot Colum! I didn't see you there. Grandfather's looking for you everywhere. I told him you're leaving and he's very angry.

**Colum:** Is he, indeed! He hasn't always wanted to have me around.

**Domelch:** But you've been here so long now that you're really one of us. Why do you have to go?

**Colum:** I must leave before the winter gales. And my God is urging me to go.

**Domelch:** Does your God really speak to you?

**Colum:** He does indeed. And He would to you too, if you gave Him a chance. *(He sings to Domelch, sharing his most precious secret with her)*

Sometimes, in a lonely cell  
In the presence of my God  
I stand and listen.

In the silence of my heart  
I can hear Him well  
When I listen.

**Domelch:** *(takes up the song, pondering)*  
Sometimes, in a lonely cell  
In the presence of my God  
I stand and listen.

In the silence of my heart  
I can hear Him well  
When —

But I haven't got time to do all that praying, like you!

**Colum:** No time for the High King of Heaven? How would the High King of the Picts feel if you treated him like that?

**Domelch:** But my grandfather's real and he gets angry.

**Colum:** My God is just as real to me.

**Domelch:** Grandfather thinks that you pay more attention to your High King of Heaven than you do to him.

**Colum:** He's right, I do.

**Domelch:** The trouble with Grandfather is that he likes to make people do what he wants but inside he despises them when they do.

**Colum:** You're a very shrewd young lady.

**Brude:** *(off)* Domelch! Domelch!! Where are you? I sent you to fetch Abbot Colum —  
*(enter)* Ah, there you are! Run along now, I want to talk to the Abbot.  
*(Exit Domelch)* You've been a good influence on that girl. I'm grateful.

**Colum:** She has a fine, courageous spirit.

**Brude:** That's one of putting it. She's a wild as a hawk. Quite unmanageable.

**Colum:** Someday, she'll make a great queen.

**Brude:** Time enough for that. I don't want her to leave me yet. She's the joy of my life. She isn't afraid of me.

**Colum:** She loves you, Brude.

**Brude:** And you're not afraid of me – which is what I like about you. But what's this I hear about your leaving? You haven't asked my permission.

**Colum:** Nor am I going to! If I did you wouldn't give it and then where would I be? No, there's something else I want to talk to you about.

**Brude:** Oh, what is it?

**Colum:** It's about a slavegirl here at your court. She's the daughter of a King and she is treated cruelly.

**Brude:** A king's daughter? You mean one of the hostages? But all our hostages are well treated, you know that.

**Colum:** She's a slave – a drudge by day and her nights are filled with terror.

**Brude:** A slave? Who's her master?

**Colum:** The Druid, Broichan.

**Brude:** Broichan!

**Colum:** Yes. This girl was ransomed by her King's Son. He died for her freedom.

**Brude:** What are you talking about?

**Colum:** I am talking about a daughter of the High King of Heaven. She is Broichan's concubine. Brude, High King of the Picts, will you set this poor Christian slavegirl free and send her home to Dalriada with us?

**Brude:** Now, Colum, Broichan was my foster-father and it would be most disrespectful to take away his concubine. And anyway, what's so important about just another slavegirl?

**Colum:** In God's eyes every soul is important.

**Brude:** I know, I know. You've told me so, often. But if I admit she belongs to your High King of Heaven, then I admit to belief in your High King of Heaven. (*Colum is silent*)

Colum, you're upsetting my peace of mind. You give me no rest. If I were to become a Christian, what about my own concubines? A Christian must have only one wife. One wife! It's against all the traditions of our people. It's against human nature. What will people think of me? And that's the least of the implications. When you ask me to free an insignificant slavegirl you ask me for much more than that . . . do you not, Colum?

**Colum:** I do, Brude. I ask you to be a father to your nation and lead your people down a new road. If you become Christ's man you will stumble upon wonder after wonder, and every wonder true.

**Brude:** *(pauses, then suddenly loses his temper)* Well, I won't do it, do you hear? You care more about a Christian slavegirl than you do about me. Broichan will raise a storm to stop you leaving – and if you try, you'll drown, do you hear, drown!!

*BLACK OUT*

**Scene (iii)**

*Broichan upstage, gesticulating and raising a storm with magic spells; Brude on his throne, stage centre; Columba with paddle downstage; thunder, wind, lightning, storm sounds all through scene)*

**Colum:** Oh, God, from the ends of the earth will I call upon Thee when my heart is overwhelmed.

**Brude:** We shall see whose power is stronger!

**Colum:** Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; for Thou hast been my hope and a strong tower for me against the enemy.

**Brude:** I'm not afraid of your God, I tell you, not afraid!

**Colum:** The Lord is King and high above all people!

**Brude:** I am the King, the High King of the Picts!

**Colum:** And the gates of hell shall not prevail against Him!

**Brude:** You give me no rest! You ask too much . . .

*(final mighty crashing of storm; Brude fearing for his friend's life, breaks down)*

Oh, Colum, my friend!

*BLACK OUT*

*(Alone on stage the slavegirl seen in II (i) sings)*

Tha mi dol dachaidh leat                    *(Scottish Gaelic)*  
Go do thaigh, go do thaigh,  
Tha mi dol dachaidh leat  
Go do thaigh geambraidh.

I have been set free  
To go home, to go home,  
I am going home with thee  
To thy home of autumn, of spring and of summer.

I am going home with thee  
To thy home, to thy home,  
I am going home with thee  
To thy home of winter.

Tha mi dol dachaidh leat  
Go do thaigh, go do thaigh,  
Tha mi dol dachaidh leat  
Go do thaigh foghair is earraigh agus samhraidh.

### BLACK OUT

### INTERLUDE

**Kenneth:** Great stories are like rivers – fed by many different streams, which together become a mighty, fast-flowing current. Our story had its source in Ireland and till now has followed the course of Columba’s life. At this point another tributary joins the river – a tributary flowing from Wales, where I spent so many years.

One of my closest friends there was Kentigern, or Mungo as we called him, the exiled Bishop of Strathclyde. When King Rhydderch was forced to leave Strathclyde Mungo fled to the monasteries of South Wales. They were years of darkness and despair for this brilliant young priest, whose whole life had disintegrated around him. But the Welsh took him to their hearts, as indeed they did me and we both learned to love that country as our own.

**Mungo:**  
*(sings, supported  
by other men if  
desired)*

I sing of Wales, where green hills meet the sea,  
Where faith burns bright as flames the rowan tree,  
I sing of Wales, where faith grew strong in me.

Of David’s church and Asaph I have sung,  
O, land of Wales, where many souls are won,  
And from whose soil a thousand saints have sprung.

I sing of Wales, where black-winged ravens cry,  
Where mountain valleys run towards the sky,  
And rocky peaks are proudly raised on high.

I sing of Wales, whose Island Dragon King  
To Rhydderch’s aid his fierce hill men did bring,  
A fearless Christian man, of him I sing.



I sing of Wales, whose mountain warriors bold  
In terror drove the pagan from his hold;  
Their mighty deeds by many a bard are told.

I Gymru ganaf uwch terfysg gwyllt y don, (Welsh)

A fflam angerddol annibyniaeth hon,  
A'r ffdd yn guriad cadarn yn fy mron.

(English: Land of my heart, where green hills meet the sea,  
Where faith burns bright as flames the rowan tree,  
Beloved Wales, where faith grew strong in me.)

**Kenneth:** After 25 years of exile, King Rhydderch returned in triumph to Strathclyde. His first action was to recall Bishop Mungo to restore the faith in his shattered kingdom. Bishop Mungo came, and 665 Welsh monks with him! Three Kings in the north formed an alliance. The first was King Brude, a life-long friend and ally, who kept an iron grip on the rebellious Pictish tribes in the far north. There was Rhydderch now back in Strathclyde. The third was one of the most brilliant young commanders in Rhydderch's army, a prince who married Brude's granddaughter, Domelch, and became King Aidan of Dalriada.

#### Scene (iv)

*Dunadd c.580. Domelch spinning with a spindle, singing softly "Hillirinn"; the occasional line is heard clearly. Aidan is preoccupied; for the first part of the scene they talk at cross purposes.*

**Aidan:** Our best chance lies in a surprise attack.

**Domelch:** I will spin me a fortune so bold –  
(sings)

**Aidan:** It's a risk, of course. But our fleet is the strongest in the North.

**Domelch:** The one I shall choose is a warrior king –  
(sings)

**Aidan:** The only way out of this situation is to win our independence from Ulster by force, now.

**Domelch:** Aidan, little Eochaidh is up to mischief again. Even Arthur doesn't seem able to control him.

**Aidan:** A surprise attack . . . take the King of Ulster unawares . . .

**Domelch:** Arthur may be longing to command an army but he can't handle a four-year old! (Aidan is lost in thought) Eochaidh needs his father to take him in hand, Aidan.

**Aidan:** *(about the war)* There is a chance it would succeed.

**Domelch:** *(about Eochaidh)* I should hope so!

**Aidan:** Colum doesn't agree.

**Domelch:** What?

**Aidan:** Abbot Colum isn't sure that I am right in going to war with Ulster.

**Domelch:** *(her attention suddenly caught)* Oh, Aidan. Then we must not.

**Aidan:** There is no other way.

**Domelch:** But Abbot Colum is usually right.

**Aidan:** As far as you are concerned, Domelch, the Abbot is always right.

**Domelch:** *(pauses)* You would not be king without him, Aidan.

**Aidan:** I am beholden to no man.

**Domelch:** We owe him everything.

**Aidan:** But he is not a strategist.

**Domelch:** *(mischievously)* Is he not? And who persuaded Grandfather to let me marry you?

**Aidan:** That was not the kind of strategy I had in mind!

**Domelch:** He convinced Brude that it would set the seal on the alliance between Dalriada and the Picts. Grandfather thought it was a brilliant stroke.

**Aidan:** It was a brilliant stroke . . . *(looks at his wife and chuckles)* In every way, my dearest!

**Domelch:** Say, where are they spun from, the threads of our fate?  
*(sings)*

**Aidan:** But now Domelch, I must take fate into my own hands.

**Domelch:** Are you sure that is right, Aidan? When I look back I see a pattern woven by something outside ourselves. If Colum is unsure, should we not wait?

**Aidan:** Wait! If I wait any longer I shall be caught in an impossible situation! If I seize the initiative now, Arthur could be king of a free and independent people. Our dynasty could unite all the Christian tribes, even rule them.

**Domelch:** I know, your great dreams. And Arthur is a fine boy. We have reason to be proud of our eldest. But surely . . .

**Aidan:** It's a far-off dream. Domelch, you still don't seem to understand the position we are in. We are vassals to the King of Ulster; he is demanding the use of our fleet, which he has a right to do, thus threatening both Rhydderch and Brude. That means our alliance could break up.

**Domelch:** But I do.

**Aidan:** It is also the chance we have been waiting for to seize our independence.

**Domelch:** Aidan –

**Aidan:** We might even persuade your grandfather that it is in his interest to send us help.

**Domelch:** Aidan, will you listen to me! Of course I understand all that. Do you not think I share your dearest hopes? But something is wrong. I lie awake at night and hear you pacing the floor. Your plans fill your life. There is no room for anything else, or anybody. You don't even notice the boys anymore.

**Aidan:** The boys will have to wait until this is settled.

**Domelch:** You talk of Arthur's future, but it's your dream.

**Aidan:** You know Arthur thinks as I do.

**Domelch:** Of course. But the truth is you have no time or will to seek the wisdom of God. Remember what Abbot Colum said.

**Aidan:** This has nothing to do with Colum.

**Domelch:** I have asked him to come to Dunadd.

**Aidan:** You have what?!

**Domelch:** I sent a message to Abbot Colum asking him to come.

**Aidan:** How dare you interfere.

**Domelch:** We need him, Aidan. These plans of yours . . . I am afraid . . . but the High King of Heaven has led us in the past.

**Colum:** *(who has entered unseen by Aidan and Domelch and overheard the last speech)*  
And he will surely lead you in the future.

**Aidan:** *(softly)* Abbot Colum! We were just talking about you!

**Domelch:** *(relieved)* How wonderful! A thousand welcomes!

**Aidan:** Did no-one greet you at the gate?

**Domelch:** I am so glad you are here.

**Colum:** I hope Aidan feels the same. The message was from you, Domelch, was it not?

**Domelch:** *(hastily)* But what has happened to you? You're covered in straw!

**Colum:** I was challenged at the gate by your new watchman.

**Aidan:** Oh?

**Colum:** A fiery little fellow with bright yellow hair.

**Domelch:** Eochaidh!

**Colum:** I think he thought I was a Saxon.

**Domelch:** That child!

**Aidan:** I'll deal with him later.

**Colum:** He has something of his mother's spirit. I seem to remember in Inverness –

**Domelch:** Now, Abbot –

**Aidan:** Abbot Colum, I am sorry about Eochaidh.

**Colum:** Think no more of it. He may be wild now – but someday he'll make a great king. I think he will succeed you.

**Aidan:** What do you mean?

**Domelch:** What about Arthur and the others?

**Colum:** I fear they will fall in battle.

**Aidan:** No!

**Colum:** I –

**Domelch:** Don't say any more! I don't want to know the future.

**Colum:** I am sorry, my dear. Sometimes I wish I wasn't able to foresee things. It can be very painful. I found it so when I saw that you should be King, Aidan, and I had to choose you instead of your brother. You see, I feared for you. I feared that your ambition

would trap you as mine trapped me. It took me three days to accept what God was telling me.

**Aidan:** I have not forgotten.

**Colum:** You are the right king, Aidan. That is why I anointed you at Iona, before the leaders of your people. We have come a long way since Brude killed your father and annexed half of Dalriada.

**Domelch:** The thread of fate has many twists.

**Colum:** It has indeed and quite beyond my understanding. (*to Aidan*) Domelch sent for me but I was coming anyway. Something has happened which I never foresaw. I think there is a chance of a solution to your present difficulties.

**Aidan:** You mean Ulster?

**Domelch:** Without going to war?

**Colum:** The High King of Ireland has called a convention at Druim Ceatt near Derry, to discuss, among other things, the question of Dalriada's independence.

**Aidan:** Will the King of Ulster be there?

**Colum:** He will, indeed, and all the bishops and scholars, too. I want you to come with me, Aidan. We'll go in style. The impression we make is important!

### *BLACK OUT*

**Kenneth:** "Forty priests were their number, twenty bishops, noble, worthy; Fifty deacons, students twenty . . ." That's what the bards sang about Columba's appearance at that historic convention. Well, Dalriada's independence from Ireland was established without resorting to war. There followed busy years for all the monks and we sometimes felt that the sea was our true home, so often did we cross it. All around the coasts of Ireland and the British Isles our currachs sailed – to Orkney, to Brittany, to the Faroës. Some of the brothers went even further. Columba alone had forty monasteries in his care, with nearly 4,000 monks and nuns in them.

God doesn't grow old, but his servants do, and old age crept up on King Brude. Finally he was killed in an encounter with Southern Pictish rebels. A year later the security of the Christian kingdoms was again threatened and Aidan led his people into battle.

Scene (v)

*Dunadd 585; Domelch alone in the middle of the night.*

**Domelch:** “There will be victory, but not a happy one . . . not a happy one . . .” What could Abbot Colum’s message mean? O Aidan, God has looked after you through so many battles; but this time I am afraid, afraid for you, and for Dalriada – for all the Christian kingdoms. Every able-bodied man went with you. And our boys. How proud they looked beside you! It was so hard for Eochaidh to stay behind, until you told him it was his special duty to protect me. He swallowed his tears then . . . Dear God, don’t abandon us now!

*(Loud banging off)*

**Mungo:** *(off)* Is anyone there?

**Domelch:** What’s that? Who can it be? *(more banging)*

**Mungo:** Ho there! Wake up! I am Mungo, Bishop Kentigern of Glasgow. I have news for the Queen. Is nobody there?

**Domelch:** Bishop Mungo! Why is he here?

**Mungo:** I bring news of the battle!

**Domelch:** News of the battle! Ho, watchman, Eochaidh, somebody, let him in!

*(Enter Mungo)*

**Mungo:** Domelch?

**Domelch:** I am Aidan’s Queen and mother of his brave sons.

**Mungo:** Grand-daughter of the mighty King Brude, our friend and ally, God rest his soul.

**Domelch:** Bishop Mungo, what has happened? Why are you here?

**Mungo:** There has been a great victory. The battle lasted all day, until sunset. It wasn’t only the Picts, they had Saxon reinforcements too –

**Domelch:** Saxons! So it has happened. What Aidan always feared.

**Mungo:** It has and they far outnumbered the men of Dalriada – but your people outwitted the enemy and they fought with such courage.

**Domelch:** And Aidan?

**Mungo:** Aidan is safe.

**Domelch:** Oh, thank God.

**Mungo:** He sent me to tell you the news.

**Domelch:** But why you?

**Mungo:** There are many dead, so many. The best are dead. My dear –

**Domelch:** Yes?

**Mungo:** Aidan wanted me to tell you. Your sons . . . they fell –

**Domelch:** They fell? You mean they are dead? Both of them?

**Mungo:** Both of them.

**Domelch:** Dead. My dear ones, my beloved children . . . dead.

(Mungo draws back and Domelch is alone with her grief)

**Domelch:**  
(*sings*)

Aidan's dream has ended,  
And my fair sons lie dead;  
Victory sweet with sorrow blended,  
Aidan's sons are dead.

I mourn with all the mothers  
Whose brave young sons have bled;  
I weep for all beloved brothers  
Who for us lie dead.

In a bleak and rugged glen  
Their gallant blood was shed;  
The best of all our fighting men  
With Aidan's sons lie dead.

They won a mighty victory,  
Those valiant hearts so bold;  
In generations yet to be  
Their valour will be told.

But Aidan's dream has ended,  
And my fair sons lie dead;  
Victory was with sorrow blended,  
Aidan's sons are dead.

(says) How many of our men were killed, Bishop Mungo?

Mungo: Too many to be able to fight another battle like that.

Domelch: Then it is the end.

Mungo: No, it is not the end, not yet, Domelch. I was thinking about it on my journey here. Do you remember when Colum's work on Iona was threatened by King Brude?

Domelch: Yes.

Mungo: Colum and Kenneth set out to convert your grandfather, straight into the lion's den. We must do the same again with the Picts, and we must find a way to reach the Saxons.

Domelch: You will never reach the Saxons. They hate us. They despise our faith and everything we are.

Mungo: We must.

Domelch: But how?

Mungo: I don't know yet. Where is Abbot Colum?

Domelch: He's on Iona.

Mungo: I must send a message to the Abbot. The time has come for us to meet. Perhaps together God can show us what to do.

*BLACK OUT*

**Scene (vi)**

*Colum and Aidan in a coracle, on their way to Glasgow; Colum sings the tune of "I thank my God", leading the paddling vigorously in time to the music. Conversation punctuated by paddling.*

Aidan: Is that a new song, Abbot?

Colum: Yes, it is. Sing it with me.

Aidan: I have no heart for singing.



**Colum:** The time for grieving is over, Aidan. Now is the time to look ahead. I am rejoicing that at last I shall meet Bishop Mungo.

*(sings)* I thank my God, who all my life has led me,  
Who gave me strength when all was near undone –

**Aidan:** What do you do, Abbot, when all you have lived for is finished?

**Colum:** Why then, Aidan, you just go on, and in the place of your dreams you put God's dream. When your own heart is empty you drink of His full cup.

*(Lights change; exit Aidan; Colum moves across to join Mungo who is waiting for him. They sing)*

**Colum:** I thank my God, who all my life has led me,  
Who gave me strength when all was near undone;  
All praise to God for now I see ahead of me  
These island races 'neath a Christian sun.

**Mungo:** O Christ my King, this holy charge you laid on me,  
To build a nation on foundations true;  
My Saviour Christ, whose love has overwhelmed me,  
We ask that Saxon hearts may turn to you.

**Both:** Dear God, be thanked for all who live courageously,  
Who, soul by soul, a new world bring to birth;  
That through long years our faith may build for all to see  
Bright colonies of heaven here on earth.

Oh, King of Heaven above, we now petition Thee  
To weld these warring races into one,  
That our beloved islands for the world might be  
A source of strength as is the summer sun.

### *BLACK OUT*

**Kenneth:** Columba and Mungo spent many hours in prayer together and decided on a new offensive starting with a mission to the Southern and Eastern Picts. But there were still the Anglo-Saxons to the south – barbaric, brutal and land hungry. It was clear to all that their conversion could never be attempted by the Celts alone, so great was the enmity between the two races. Five years later Bishop Mungo felt able to leave for Rome to meet Pope Gregory and consult him. Twelve hundred miles – it was a long walk for an old man of seventy.

Towards the end of Columba's life a strange incident happened. It was on one of his many trips to Ireland. He was staying at Kells at the time. One day he set out towards Tara, the ancient seat of the High Kings, abandoned now for many years . . .

### Scene (vii)

*Enter Colum with staff and water bottle; he pauses to rest and drink; enter an old man – Bec macDe, but unrecognised by Colum.*

**Colum:** Would you like a drink, my friend? I have just stopped for a rest myself.

**Bec:** Thank you. (*reluctantly he drinks and sits down*) Are you going to Tara, Abbot? It must be many years since you went this way.

**Colum:** It is many years. But how would you know that? Who are you?

**Bec:** Search into the past, Columcille, among old acquaintances and old enemies.

**Colum:** You know my childhood name! But why do you say enemies? I have no enemies, that is, of my own seeking.

**Bec:** A man like you has many enemies. A man like you, who could not be bought, who had but one goal . . . And the people loved you!

**Colum:** We must have crossed each other once for you to talk like that.

**Bec:** We did, Columcille!

**Colum:** Your voice strikes some chord in my memory, a voice out of the past . . . Are you – Bec macDe?

**Bec:** I am Bec macDe, old now in years, but strong and vigorous in mind.

**Colum:** Bec macDe. I have prayed for many years that we might meet again. I didn't even know if you were still alive, but I had a strange, strong thought to walk today to Tara.

**Bec:** And I have prayed to my gods, Columcille, that we would never meet again. Even in this your God is stronger. I have lived a long time and there has been much disappointment. The old religion is dying and my power is waning. It is your doing, Colum.

**Colum:** It is Christ's doing. (*Bec turns away impatiently*)  
Has it been revealed to you, Bec macDe, how much longer you have to live?

**Bec:** It is not only you, Columcille, that have the Second Sight. All my life in dreams and trances, things of great importance have been revealed to me. It was revealed to me in a dream that I have seven years to live.

**Colum:** Seven years! That is indeed a long life. A man can do much good in seven years.

**Bec:** Do you, a Christian, really believe that an old pagan can do good, especially Bec macDe?

**Colum:** I told you that I had prayed that we might meet again one day. When Curnan was killed at the games so many years ago, I hated you, and for a long time I hoped that evil would befall you. That hatred turned my heart to stone. Many innocent people suffered. Then I prayed to the Christ who was crucified to forgive me. And I prayed that one day I might be able to set this right with you; and ask you, too, to forgive me.

**Bec:** A monk who asks a Druid to forgive him! Yes, I forgive you. Time is running out for me now. I told you a lie. It has been revealed to me that I have seven weeks to live. What can a man do with seven weeks whose whole life has been given to winning power? Oh, what use to me are seven weeks!

**Colum:** A man can do much good in seven weeks, Bec macDe, and there's much good that needs doing.

**Bec:** Never before have I lied about a revelation. It is not seven weeks, Holy Abbot, that I have left, but seven hours.

**Colum:** Then let us spend those seven hours together. God can do much for a man in seven hours.

**Bec:** I am old and alone. I have long feared that there was little in our worship. Man is like a sparrow who flies into a warm, lighted banqueting-hall, and then out again into the night. The night is dark and I am afraid.

**Colum:** There is no night beyond that hall, only a great light. And I will tell you what I know of that light.

(*Bec falls on his knees before the Abbot, who prays for the dying man*)

**Colum:** God, omit not this man from Thy covenant,  
Despite the many evils which he in body committed  
That he cannot this night enumerate;  
Be this soul on thine own arm, O Christ,  
Thou King of the City of Heaven.

Scene (viii)

Iona 597

**Reprise:** Iona lays a blessing on every eye that sees it,  
With peace this soul caressing, to calm it and to please it;  
Iona's benediction on this great soul that leaves it.

Iona, a blessing, Iona,  
The wild winds whipping,  
Comfort stripping  
With the gale's harsh breath;  
Iona, Iona,  
The waters glisten,  
The wild winds listen  
As life meets death,  
Iona.

**Colum:** My children, *(he gathers the monks around him)* these are my last words to you. Have genuine love and peace between yourselves; and God who comforts the good will strengthen you and I will pray for you. And He will give you not only your needs for the present life but the eternal good gifts as well. *(At this point the audience needs to realise that Columba has died)*

*(The grieving monks chant in his honour)*

Altus prosator vetustus  
Dierum et ingenitus  
Erat absque origine  
Primordie et crepidine.

*(Stage in darkness; the Song of Keening is spoken against a lament played on the harp. This represents the voice of the ordinary people mourning his passing)*

It is not a little story, this is not the story of a fool;  
It is not one district that is keening, nor grief of one harpstring;  
He, our rightful head, God's messenger, is dead;  
The teller of words who took away our fear, does not return.  
The learned one who taught us silence is gone from us;  
He gave kindness for hatred, he broke the battle against hunger;  
Healer of hearts, satisfier of guests,  
Shelter of the naked, comfort of the poor;  
Nor went any from this world who more steadfastly bore the Cross.  
It is high his death was.

## EPILOGUE

**Narrator:** The summer after Columba died came the news that Augustine and forty monks  
(*one or more* had arrived in Kent, sent by Pope Gregory to begin the conversion of the Anglo-  
*of the company* Saxons. Within a few years of Columba's death, all his old comrades had died too;  
– *not Colum* Kenneth, Mungo, King Rhydderch and even Pope Gregory.  
*or Kenneth*)

The story of the next century is the direct outcome of Columba's work and that of his great allies. Iona and the monasteries of Wales and Scotland continued to pour out their men across the north and west of these islands and in the south the men of Rome began to make their influence felt. A hundred years after the founding of Iona, its warmth and light were reaching to the farthest corners of the British Isles, and the English nation began to flower.

A great hunger for learning took possession of the young men of England and later of Europe. In their thousands they flocked to Ireland, where the monks received them with great kindness and not only taught them free of charge, but supplied them with books, food and lodging. At first in twos and threes and then in ever increasing numbers these monks from Ireland, the Peregrini, they were called, turned their backs on home and set sail for Europe. They built monasteries as far apart as Kiev and the Bay of Biscay, and their prayer bells were heard from Carthage to Iceland. For 400 years they restored the Christian faith, founded schools, taught the arts of writing and skilled agriculture; and slowly, out of the Dark Ages, dawned the light of Christian Europe.

**Company:** Home is not a place, it's a road to be travelled, we say,  
(*sings*) Our only defence is the armour of God,  
With the Gospel of Peace our feet are shod;  
So alone, alone,  
We walk into the great unknown.

Mightier than fear is the Shield of Faith we bear;  
Our task is to lighten another's load,  
And home for us is the great high road,  
So alone, alone,  
We walk into the great unknown.

Righteousness our Breastplate, the Belt of Truth we wear;  
We go where conquering armies have trod,  
But we carry the Sword of the Word of God;  
So alone, alone,  
We walk into the great unknown.

The seed of God's love in the hearts of men we sow;  
And stronger and taller that seed will grow,  
That all creation the truth may know;  
Then alone, alone,  
It will conquer the great unknown.

*(One of the company turns to the audience and says)*

How can we forget Ireland, where the sun of faith rose for us?

## NOTES ON THE MUSIC

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in so many ways with the music for "Columba", especially Philip Carleston, Malcolm and Margaret Mackay, Dr. W.L. Reed and Dame Hildelith Cumming O.S.B.; also George Robertson for his adaptation of a 6th century chant for "Altus Prosator" and Blair Cummock who has hand-transcribed the music.

The music for accompanying the "Song of Keening" is taken from the traditional Owen Roe Lament.

Accompaniments can vary according to the instruments available. The main accompaniment should be provided by the Clarsach (Celtic harp) which can be supported by flute and 'cello. Tin whistles, guitar, hand bells and skin drums have also been used. The traditional drum, the bodhran, is made of goatskin. Incidental music e.g. improvisation on the melodies, has been effective during some of the scenes and scene-changes.

A cassette of the music from "Columba", recorded informally, is available from Fowler Wright Books Ltd., Leominster, Herefordshire.

Elaine Gordon  
Cork 1981

# Weep for the World

WITH GREAT EMOTION ♩ = 92

© The Oxford Group 1981

(Humming)

(MAN) Weep for the world; ————— How black the night when ev-ery

light has gone, ————— How dark the days and months that are to

come. (CHORUS) Weep for the world, ————— Great ci - ties sacked, be-

lo - ved pla - ces burned; Hope bleeds to death, no

staun-ching of the wound.

(Humming)

*f* Weep for the world; —————

— Mobs rape and kill, and now the fall of Rome; ————— the





bea-con light of all the world is gone. (WOMAN) I can-not pray;



When sword is sheathed the plague creeps si-len-tly, My



home a grave and day brings tra-ge-dy.



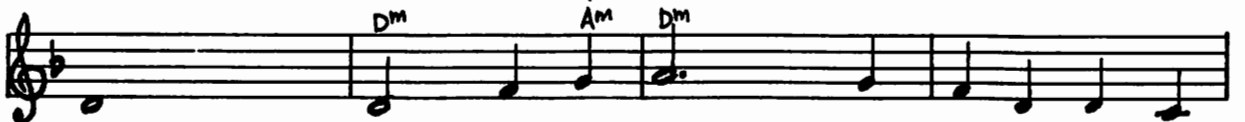
flee, But where to hide my child? Death stalks the shade;



For Christ has died a-gain and I'm a-fraid. (KENNETH) My



heart is sick; Hope fails, but in the black-ness of des-



pair Shall flames of faith light up the dark-ness



there, (CHORUS) To light and lead us on?

# Eithne's Dream

GENTLY ♩ = 50

© The Oxford Group 1981



[INTRODUCTION TO BE  
PLAYED SOFTLY]



Sleep my child, sleep sweet-ly, May the an-gels watch thee;



Sleep my Co-lum, sleep my son, God will keep thee sa - fely.

(says) When you were born I had a dream —

EXPRESSIVELY ♩ = 84



I dreamed a cloak was gi - ven to me, The love-li-est cloak I



e-ver did see, The co - lours of a spring mea-dow, Its co - lours glowed a -



live and free. But threads of dark-ness I could see, I won-der what they



mean for thee, Those co - lours of a spring mea-dow. The love-li-est cloak I

e-ver did see, A strong wind took it a-way from me, Till it spread a-far o-ver

land and sea, The co-lours of a spring mea-dow. The love-li-est cloak, the

love-li-est cloak, the love-li-est cloak I e-ver did see. (INTRODUCTION)

Dream my child, dream sweet-ly, Dream of fu-ture glo-ry,

Dream of high-ty bat-tles won, You shall be brave and migh-ty.

Sleep my child, sleep sweet-ly, May the an-gels watch thee;

Sleep my Co-lum, sleep my son, God will keep thee sa-fely.

(hums)

# Clonard

LIVELY ♩. = 104

© The Oxford Group 1981

dis-ci-pline of prayer and prea-ching forged a will to serve man-kind. DC al fine

# Monks' Working Song

With great energy

4 PARTS ROUND ♩. = 76

REPEAT 3 TIMES

Pray till the tears come, work till the sweat comes for our own and o-thers' needs.

LAST TIME

1 C B<sup>b</sup> 2 C B<sup>b</sup> 3 C B<sup>b</sup> 4 C Fine

Pray till the tears come, work till the sweat comes, Help your neighbour and give to the poor.

## Clonard: part two

$\text{♩} = 84$

D<sup>m</sup> C F D<sup>m</sup> G<sup>m</sup>

For we have come to seek the mea-ning Of man's life u-pon the earth;

D<sup>m</sup> C A<sup>m</sup> D<sup>m</sup> B<sup>b</sup> C D [Maj]

$\text{♩} = 104$

And the truth is worth the glea-ning That God's king-dom come to birth.

D D D

Clo-nard, where the wa-ters run, Where the fields of

G A D

grain are gro-wing; Clo-nard, where the young men come,

D D G A D

Sear-ching, lon-ging, lear-ning, kno-wing; Clo-nard on the

G D D G D

banks of Boyne, Clo-nard on the banks of Boyne.

# Purity, Wisdom and Prophecy

WITH DEVOTION

♩. = 63 (freely)

© The Oxford Group 1981



Pu-ri-ty, wis-dom and pro-phe-cy, These are the gifts I would ask of thee, Oh,



High King of Hea-ven, grant them to me. The lamp of the bo-dy is



pu-ri-ty, And those that have it their God shall see, For the pure in heart know



how to love and I have longed my lo-ve to prove.



This is the gift I would ask of thee, Oh, Lord of my man-hood be-stow it on me.



Your wis-dom I pray for a light for the mind, And those that seek it shall



sure-ly find the way in which to serve and lead; My peo-ple are lost and a



shep-herd need. The gift of the soul is pro-phe-cy; En-

large my vi-sion that I might see the past and the pre-sent and fu-ture as one that  
 here on this earth Thy will be done. D. C. al fine

## Derry Mine

JOYFULLY  $\text{♩} = 96$

© The Oxford Group 1981

Der-ry mine, my small oak grove,

My small cell, my home and my love; Oh, thou Lord of las-ting life,

Woe to him who brings it strife. Mo

Dhoi— re mo dhai—rea—gan, Mo á— ras is m'ai—re glan; A

Dhé, bhí fuil thuas ar neamh, Is mai—rg do ghni a sá—rúghadh.

# The Ballad of Culdremne

WITH GREAT PASSION ♩ = 92

© The Oxford Group 1981

Bloo - dy the bat - tle and count - less the men that

fell on the field of Cul - dre — mne; For the

Nor - thern O' Ni - all with Con - naught as one de -

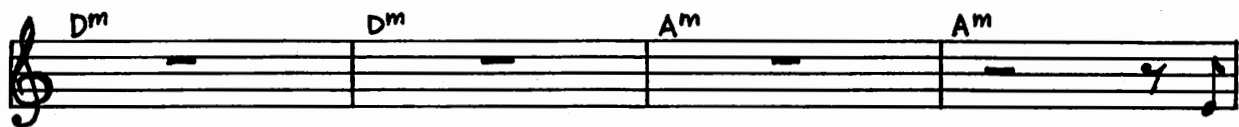
fea - ted the Dru - ids and vic - to - ry won, They

van - quished King Diar - mit to a - venge a dead son, In the

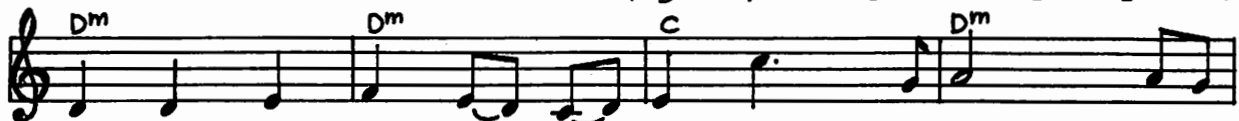
name of the High King of Hea — ven. [SAYS WHILE MUSIC CONTINUES]

And were we not right to do so? King Diarmid raised the Southern clans to crush the North;





now the Christians need never fear the pagans' power again. [sings] Yes,



bloo - dy the bat - tle, for thou - sands were slain from the



South on the fields of Cul - dre mne; The



pa - gans were rou - ted, de - fea - ted their side, yet



on - ly one man from the Nor - them side died, and



long was the fea - sting in glo - ry and pride and



praise to the High King of Hea - ven.

# Oh, Son of my God

Animatedly

$\text{♩} = 84$

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[INTRODUCTION]

1. Oh,

Son of my God, what a pride, — what a pleasure to plough the blue sea, — The

waves of the fountains of deluge — To measure dear Erin, to thee. — Those

things I am leaving behind me, — the very most dear that I know, — Tir

Leidach and Derry, — I'm leaving alas, I must go. —

2. In

Derry, sweet Derry, the cattle — are leaving at earliest dawn; — On the

brink of the summer the pigeons — are cooing and doves on the lawn. — The

F B<sup>b</sup> F G<sup>m</sup>

sound of the wind in the elms like the strings of a harp being played, — The

F B<sup>b</sup> F C

note of the black-bird that claps with the wings of de-light in the glade. —

F G<sup>m</sup>/F<sup>bass</sup> B<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup>/F<sup>bass</sup> F B<sup>b</sup> C

3. A-

F F F F

las for the vo-yage the High King of Hea-ven en-joined u-pon me, — For the

F G<sup>m</sup> F B<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup> F

lands of the Picts must be won to Christ's cal-ling there o-ver the sea. — So with

A<sup>m</sup> G<sup>m</sup> F G<sup>m</sup> Poco Rit

prayers and with cou-rage we bro-thers — set sail — for Al-ba the fair, —

F F B<sup>b</sup> F C B<sup>b</sup> F A tempo

Half of my bles-sings for Picts and half for the Gael in E-rin so dear. —

F G<sup>m</sup> B<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup> C F

(With acknowledgment to Cassell Ltd for the use of a translation by Douglas Hyde of Columba's own poem.)

# Song for Iona

Peacefully and freely ♩ = 76

© The Oxford Group 1981

Chords: C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

l- o- na, l- o- na, l- o- na, The sea-gulls cry-ing, wheel-ing, fly-ing o'er the rain-washed bay; l-

Chords: C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup>

o- na, l- o- na, The soft breeze sig- hling, The waves re- ply - ing on a clear, blue day, l-

Chords: G<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup>

o- na. l- o- na lays a bles- sing on e- very eye that sees it, with peace each soul ca- res- sing as

Chords: G<sup>m</sup> C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup> C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

if to com- mand please it; l- o- na's be- ne- dic- tion on e- very soul that leaves it. l- o- na, l- o- na, l-

Chords: A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup>

o- na, The wild winds whip- ping, com- fort strip- ping with the gales' chill sword; l- o- na, l- o- na, The

Chords: A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup> G<sup>m</sup>

wa- ters glis- ten, The wild winds lis- ten to the voice of our Lord; l- o- na. |

Chords: E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup> G<sup>m</sup>

o- na's bles- sing strength- ens and firm- ly it will hold you; Then from this roc- ky for- tress goes forth the is- land sol- dier; May

Chords: C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> G<sup>m</sup> C<sup>m</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

Christ who calm- ed the tem- pest with safe- ty now en- fold you. l- o- na, l- o- na, l- o- na

# Iona: first reprise

Musical score for 'Iona: first reprise' in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The score consists of three staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes.

*p* I-o-na, I-o-na, I-o-na, The sea-gulls cry-ing, rain squalls dy-ing  
 As the cur-rags sail; *mf* I-o-na, I-o-na, Through tide and wea-ther set  
 forth to-ge-ther in the teeth of the gale; I-o-na.

# Ho, My Heifer

MERRILY  $\text{♩} = 84$  © The Oxford Group 1981

Musical score for 'Ho, My Heifer' in 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes. The piece ends with a double bar line and the word 'Fine'.

Ho, my hei-fer, hei-fer, hei-fer! Ho, my hei-fer, kind-ly, calm,  
 Ho, my hei-fer, gen-tle, gen-ter, Thou art the love of thy mo-ther. Co-  
 lum-ba will give to her pro-ge-ny, God will give to her grass; My  
 hei-fer will give her milk to me And her fe-male calf. DC al fine

# Sometimes in a lonely cell

VERY FREE TEMPO (UNACCOMPANIED)

© The Oxford Group 1981



Some-times in a lone-ly cell in the pre-sence of my God I stand — and



lis-ten. In the si-lence of my heart I can hear him well —



when — I lis-ten. Des-pai-ring peo-ple flock to me, they ex-pect that



I can see — the ans-wers. They ask my ad-vice, they



say I am wise; I ans-wer that no-thing can de-ceive me



if I stand a-lone and si-len-tly lis-ten. — For I am but a



ser-vant who is gui-ded by his King — when — I lis-ten

D.C. al fine

# Hillirinn ho ro

PLAYFULLY  $\text{♩} = 80$

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1. I will spin me a for-tune so bold and so sweet, Oh, hil-li-rinn ho-ro hu ri-o. Come,



count the brave he-roes who fall at my feet, Oh, hil-li-rinn ho ro hu ri-o. The



one I shall chase is a war-ri-or King, and how he shall love me to sing, — Oh,



hil-li-rinn, hil-li-rinn, ho ro, ho ro, hil-li-rinn ho ro hu ri-o. 2. And



Oh, I would spin me a des-ti-ny great, Oh, hil-li-rinn ho ro hu ri-o. Say



where are they spun from, the threads of our fate? Oh, hil-li-rinn ho ro hu ri-o. What



for-tune is spin-ning for me and my King? Come spin me the song we shall sing, — Oh,



hil-li-rinn, hil-li-rinn, ho ro, ho ro, hil-li-rinn ho ro hu ri-o.

# Tha mi dol dachaid leat

JOYFULLY ♩ = 96

© The Oxford Group 1981

[AN INSTRUMENT PLAYS] [VOICE] Tha mi dol da-chaid leat go do thaigh, go do thaigh, Tha mi

dol da-chaid leat go do thaigh geamh-raidh. I have been set free to go home, to go home, I am

go-ing home with thee to thy home of au-tumn, of spring and of sum-mer.

[INSTRUMENT] [VOICE] I have been set free to go

home, to go home, I am go-ing home with thee to thy home of win-ter. Tha mi dol da-chaid leat go do

thaigh, go do thaigh, Tha mi dol da-chaid leat go do thaigh to-ghair is ear-raich a-gus

samh-raid. [INSTRUMENT]



# I sing of Wales

PASSIONATELY

♩ = 86

© The Oxford Group 1981

EM D EM C G Bm

I sing of Wales, where green hills meet the sea, where faith burns bright as flames the ro-wan tree, I sing of  
 (weisi) | Gyn-ru ga-rut uwch ter-fyag gwylt y don, A ffiam an-gor-dol an-ni-by-niaeth hon, Atffydd yn

Wales, where faith grew strong in me. Of Da-vid's church and A-saph I have sung, Oh land of  
 gw-riad ca-darn yn ty mron.

Wales, where ma-n-y souls are won. And from whose soil a thou-sand saints have sprung.

I sing of Wales, where black winged ra-vers cry, where moun-tain val-leys run towards the sky, And ro-cky

peaks are proud-ly raised on high. I sing of Wales whose i-sland dra-gon King — to Rhyd-derch's

aid his fierce hill men did bring, A fear-less Christian man of him I sing. I

sing of Wales, whose moun-tain warriors bold — in ter-ror drove the pa-gon from his hold; Their

migh-ty deeds by many a bard are told. Land of my heart, where green hills meet the sea, where

faith burns bright as flames the ro-wan tree — Be-loved Wales where faith grew strong in me

# Aidan's lament

Plaintively

$\text{♩} = 40$

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The musical score is written in a single system with ten staves. Each staff contains a line of music in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes, and chords are indicated by letters above or below the notes. The lyrics are: "Ai-dan's dream has en-ded, And my fair sons lie dead; vic-to-ry sweet with sor-row blen-ded, Ai-dan's sons are dead. I mourn with all the mo-thers whose brave young sons have bled; I weep for all be-lo-ved bro-thers who for us lie dead. In a bleak and rug-ged glen Their gal-lant blood was shed; The". The chords used are F, Bb, Am, Gm, and Dm.

F B $\flat$  F F

Ai-dan's dream has en-ded, And my fair

sons lie dead; vic-to-ry sweet with

sor-row blen-ded, Ai-dan's sons are dead.

I mourn with all the mo-thers whose

brave young sons have bled; I weep for

all be-lo-ved bro-thers who for us lie

dead. In a bleak and rug-ged glen

Their gal-lant blood was shed; The

best of all our fight-ing men with Ai-dan's  
 sons lie dead. ————— They won a might-y  
 vic-tory, ————— Those va-liant hearts so bold; —————  
 ————— In ge-ner-a-tions yet to be Their  
 va-lour will be told. ————— But Ai-dan's  
 dream has en-ded, ————— And my fair sons lie  
 dead; ————— Vic-to-ry was with sor-row  
 Am Gm blended, Ai-dan's sons are dead. —————

# I thank my God

Animatedly  $\text{♩} = 104$

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(COLUM) I thank my God, who all my life has led me, who gave me strength when all was near un-done ;

All praise to God — for now I see a-head of me These is-land ra — ces heath a Chris-tian sun.

(MUNA) Oh, Christ my King, this ho-ly charge you laid on me, To build a na- tion on four-da-tions true;

My Sa-viour Christ, whose love has o-ver-whel-med me, We ask that Sa- xon hearts may turn to you.

(BOTH) Dear God, be thanked for all who live cou-ra-geous-ly, who, soul by soul, a new world bring to birth;

That through long years our faith may build for all to see Bright co-lo-nies of hea-ven here on earth.

Oh, King of heav'n a - bove, we now pe-ti-tion Thee — to weld these war- ring ra-ces in-to one,

That our be-lo- ved is-lands for the world might be A source of strength — as is the sum-mer sun.

## Iona: second reprise

[INTRODUCTION]

I-o-na lays a bles-sing on e-vry eye that sees it, with peace his soul car-res-sing, to  
 calm it and to please it; I-o-nas be-ne-dic-tion on this great soul that leaves it. I-o-na, a bles-sing I-  
 o-na, The wild winds whipping com-fort stripping with the gates harsh breath; I-o-na, I-o-na, The  
 wa-ters dis-ten, the wild winds lis-ten as life meets death, I-o-na.

## Altus Prosator

In the style of plainsong, (unaccompanied)

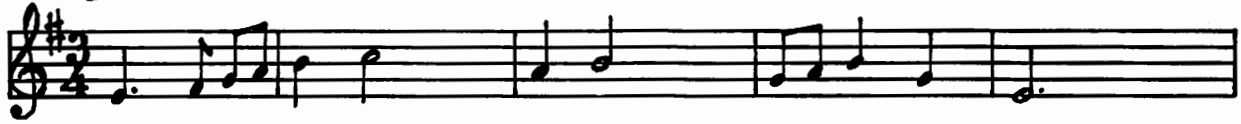
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Al-tus pro-sa-tor ve-tu-stus Di-e-rum et in-  
 ge-ni-tus E-rat abs-que o-ri-gi-ne Pri-  
 mor-di-e et cre-pi-di-ne. ne.

# Song of Keening

Very free time

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SOLO INSTRUMENT PLAYS THROUGHOUT

[SPOKEN]

It is not a little story,



this is not the story of a fool; It is not one district that is keening, nor grief of one



harpstring; He, our rightful head, Gods messenger is dead; The teller of words who



took away our fear does not return. The learned one who taught us silence



is gone from us; He gave kindness for hatred, he broke the battle against hunger;



Healer of hearts, satisfier of guests, Shelter of the naked, comfort of the



poor; Nor went any from this world who more steadfastly bore



the Cross. It is high his death was.

# Song of the Peregrini

With great conviction  $\text{♩} = 112$

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The musical score is written in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. Performance instructions such as [1st voices], [2nd voices], [ALL], [ALL SING IN UNISON], and [CONTINUE IN UNISON TO S.] are included. The lyrics are: "Home is not a place, it's a road to be travelled, we say, road to be travelled, we say, Our on-ly de-fence is the ar-mour of God with the Go-spel of Peace our feet are shod; so a-lone, a-lone, we walk in-to the great un-known. known Migh-ti-er than fear is the shield of faith we bear; Our task is to ligh-ten a-no-ther's load, And home for us is the great high-road so a-lone, a-lone, we walk in-to the great un-known. Right-eous-ness our breast plate the

Belt of Truth we wear; We go where con-que-ri-  
 ar- miahetrod, But we car-ry the sword of the word of God [1st voices] So a-

lone, a-lone, we walk in-to the great un- known. [2nd voices] A - lone, a - lone, we

walk in-to the great un- known The

seed of Gods love in the hearts of men we sow; [ALL]

sow; And stron-ger and tal-ler that

seed will grow, That all cre-a-tion the truth may know; [1st voices] Then a-

lone, a-lone, it will con-quer the great un- known

con-quer the great un- known.



# Columba

'How a high born Irish prince in the 6th century, who bid fair to become the High Lord, deliberately turned his back on that barbarous splendour, and instead sought solitude and poverty on a bleak Atlantic-beaten rock, is the theme of the play. It is performed in a series of swift fragments; in the end the imagination delights to put them together in a harmonious whole.'

*George MacKay Brown*

'The subject is at once extensive and complex, yet the play manages—by its very simplicity—to convey a true feeling of the conflict between Christian monk and pagan Druid, the man of peace and the man of war.'

*Glasgow Herald*

'It is without doubt the songs of Columba which are its main attraction. By turns touching, amusing and moving they are without exception elegant and strong.... a haunting beauty....'

*Isis, Oxford University Magazine*

'...a truly Celtic mixture of action, mysticism, humour and music....'

*Scottish Catholic Observer*



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