

The Summer Garden

A Musical Play in Two Acts

By David Barrett

Full Version

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The Summer Garden – Dramatis Personae

Narrator	
Garmangarbis	An old goblin
Oric	the sorcerer
In the Village:	
Athelstan	a well-to-do merchant of Fritham
Wilda	his wife
Nelda	older daughter
Orva	older daughter
Odelia	younger daughter
Elvina	Odelia's poor friend
Wilfrid, Sigbert	Athelstan's Servants
Villagers	
At the Castle:	
Prince Wulfstan	the beast
Servant 1	
Servant 2	
Servant 3	
Hengist	Wulfstan's footman
Horsa	Wulfstan's footman
Lord Locksley	a nobleman
Page	
Waiters	
Nobles and courtiers	
Musicians	
Dancers	

Prologue

The lighting for this scene should be dim, and preferably backlit, so that the actors are mere shadows miming the action as if it were a dream. The narrator could be unseen off-stage, perhaps with the voice amplified, or standing downstage under a spotlight.

NARRATOR

Gather round and listen well as I tell the tale of magic, mystery, wickedness, compassion and love. Our story has its roots deep in days of yore when knights on majestic mounts did defeat dragons and deliver damsels from their distress. In a certain castle Brocburg there lived a sorcerer of great renown, whose powers made even the mighty Merlin appear like a court conjuror. This same sorcerer kept a lowly goblin servant, more from pity of him than of his abilities. Garmangarbis by name, he was grotesque of feature and of nature more twisted than a viper's tail. One duty of this foul fiend was to tend to the healing herbs in a magical garden, created by the great sorcerer, Oric.

(Enter Garmangarbis and sorcerer who mime the following sequence.)

But, not content to receive this charity, in disdainful deceit the covetous creature stole from his benevolent benefactor. Being of simple mind, however, the dim-witted dwarf failed to cover his traces and was swiftly dismissed from his duties. Generosity knowing no bounds and, compelled by compassion, the sorcerer gave the worthless wretch parting gifts of an exquisitely carved oaken chest, containing the secret of eternal happiness, and the granting of one wish – to be used only for the power of good. As a final gesture the sorcerer, placed the key to the chest on a chain around Garmangarbis's neck.

(Exit sorcerer.)

The key, however was too large for the lock and Garmangarbis found he was unable to open it and discover the secret of eternal happiness. His frustration grew daily and with it the key, rendering any notion of opening the chest an impossibility. In his obsession with the chest, the goblin quite forgot the one wish he was graciously granted by the sorcerer. Until one day, when his anger had reached its peak, the malevolent malefactor struck out at the nearest living creature – the unfortunate prince Wulfstan, only son of Aldwulf, ruler of the southern kingdom.

(Enter Wulfstan.)

Poor Wulfstan, daydreaming as boys do, was wishing aloud, as he picked a white rose from the garden, for the most beautiful girl in the kingdom to be his bride. Garmangarbis, with his one wish, in a fit of rage and jealousy consigned the prince to a despicable destiny. In a terrible transformation Wulfstan was cursed with a bear-like body and sharp claws, a long hairy snout and a foul temper. The boy roared in anguish when he realised his fearful fate. Unknown to the boy, the

goblin's curse allowed a reverse charm to undo the spell, but Garmangarbis chuckled to himself at the thought of any girl falling in love with that creature, let alone shedding tears for it. The reprehensible rogue then simply picked up his possessions and began to wend his way.

(Exit Garmangarbis.)

Thus, was poor Wulfstan destined to count the passing of days as a recluse, living mostly in the Summer Garden, hidden from the eyes of the public. Upon the death of his father, Wulfstan inherited the castle, land and an army of servants, who would wait on him, without ever questioning his grotesque appearance.

(Exit Wulfstan.)

Scene 1: On the Green in Front of Athelstan's House in Fritham

(The curtain opens on a country village scene dotted with trees and simple buildings. In the background is a cloth or flat of Athelstan's house with an open doorway. In the foreground the villagers are dancing on the village green and singing.)

SONG 1, Chorus, Country Life

Chorus:

When you're tired of city life, of garbage smells and sewage,
Jump aboard a horse and cart and join us in our village.
When you need some country air to freshen up your lung,
Amble down to Giles's yard and breathe the scent of dung. So

If you love the great outdoors come down and try your luck,
Do not wear your finest clothes for wading through the muck.
Rustic life is full of fun if you prefer it laid-back,
Chewing on a piece of grass and lying on a haystack.

Verse 1:

We don't promise great hotels, just country mud and dung smells,
If you're posh then don't come here, bath-day comes just once a year.
Pigs manure between your toes and a clothes-peg on your nose.

Verse 2:

Rabbit stew and Daisy's moo a bucket for a loo,
Dancing on the village green, rubbing shoulders with the queen.
Leave behind the city toffs, take a bath in Daisy's trough.

(After the song the villagers drift back to their business upstage, leaving the principal characters downstage)

ELVINA *(In a country accent.)* Oh, Odelia, that was such fun. Please let's do the dance again.

ODELIA *(In a cultured accent.)* There's no time, Elvina. Father must leave for market at Burley or he will not get his stall set up in time.

ATHELSTAN That's right my girl. I'm already late and must ride like the wind to make up time.

ELVINA But Athelstan, you've only just returned from your last trip. How long will you be away this time?

ATHELSTAN I should be only about three days, young Elvina. And don't you worry. My wife, Wilda, is quite capable of running the house in my absence.

WILDA *(Off-stage)* Athelstan! Athelstan, where the devil are you? I hope you've not left already.

ODELIA Talk of the devil. Here's mother now.
(Enter Wilda, looking fierce)

WILDA Ah, there you are, Athelstan. Now what did I tell you about that woollen tunic? Do I have to pack your trunk myself?

ATHELSTAN No Wilda, dear, I am quite capable.

WILDA Yes, but you didn't pack your woollen tunic. That rough hemp will never keep you warm in these chill winter days, now will it?

ATHELSTAN No dear, if you say not.

ODELIA Mother, please don't fuss. Father has been away before. He knows what to pack.

WILDA Oh does he? And have you forgotten that he came back with a fever last year. It nearly took him away from us it was that bad.
(Athelstan coughs)

ELVINA I think she's right, Athelstan, you must be careful of your health.
(Enter Nelda and Orva)

NELDA Why you young upstart. How dare you speak to my parents like that. Who do you think you are?

ODELIA I..I..I..

ORVA The daughter of a basket weaver. That's who she is. Merely a lowly basket weaver.

NELDA I don't know why you are always here, hanging around our house. Are you looking for some charity, or something?

ODELIA The reason she's here is because she's my friend and I asked her to come. So what if her father is a poor, humble basket weaver. A touch of humility wouldn't come amiss around here.

NELDA How dare you speak to us like that. We are your elders and deserve some respect.

ODELIA Respect must be earned. Now just leave my friend alone, will you.

ATHELSTAN Come now, my dears, there is no need for these harsh words. I will need you to work together to keep the household going while I am away. Now Elvina, go and ask Wilfrid and Sigbert to bring the trunk out as we must soon be on our way. *(Exit Elvina)*

WILDA Tell them, Athelstan. You don't ask servants to do something, you tell them.
(She struts off upstage and harasses the villagers.)

ORVA That's your problem, father, you're too soft.

ATHELSTAN Watch your tongue girl, or I'll find a new use for my belt.

ORVA You wouldn't use your belt on me Daddykins, would you? Besides, if you took your belt off your trousers would fall down.
(Laughter from the others)

NELDA Will you bring us back presents this time, Father? You often do.

ORVA Oh, yes, I do so love having presents when you return.

ATHELSTAN And if I did choose to bring you something, what would you wish for?

ORVA Oh, I would love to have a necklace of the purest silver from the orient...

NELDA And I ... a bracelet of the finest pearls from the Indian Ocean.

ATHELSTAN Well, you don't ask much do you! And you, my precious youngest daughter, what would you wish for?

ODELIA Oh, nothing, Father, except your safe return.

ORVA *(Mimicking, aside)* Oh nothing, except your safe return.

NELDA Oh Odelia – you are sooo boring!

ATHELSTAN I pray you make a wish, Odelia, and if it is in my power, I shall grant it.
 ODELIA Oh, very well! I wish.... I wish ... for a pure white rose in bloom.
(Nelda bursts into a fit of giggles)
 ORVA Why, that's ridiculous! It is midwinter and you know father cannot honour your wish.
 ODELIA Well it's no more ridiculous than your excessive vanity in asking for the finest adornments. But, of course, being so plain, you would both need to add ornaments to catch a man's eye.
 NELDA How dare you, you precious little monster... *(aside)* Just you wait until father has gone. We'll show you!
(Enter Wilfrid and Sigbert, carrying the trunk, followed by Elvina.)
 WILFRID It's your turn to carry the baggage, I did it last time.
 SIGBERT You little liar! I did it last time. I carried that big leather bag of trinkets and baubles all the way up the hill while you strolled up whistling one of your silly tunes.
 WILFRED You have a short memory, Sigbert. That was not the last time. What about last Tuesday when we went to Brockenhurst market?
 SIGBERT You always have to be right, don't you, Wilfred? Even when you're wrong.
 WILFRED Just because you say I'm wrong that doesn't mean it's true, does it.
 SIGBERT Why you little.....
 WILDA QUIET! Now just get on with it without the constant bickering, you silly little men, or we'll be here all day.
(They exit with the trunk, grumbling and continuing the argument in undertones. Sigbert glowers at Wilda as he exits.)
 ATHELSTAN And now, my dear people, alas, I fear the time has come when we must take our leave and away to market.
 ODELIA Goodbye, Father, and may you have a safe journey.
 WILDA And bring us back lots of money...
 ORVA And a silver necklace...
 NELDA And a pearl bracelet...
 ATHELSTAN And, of course, a white rose in bloom. Now Wilfred, Sigbert, if you would kindly bring the trunk.
 WILDA Will you never learn, Athelstan...
(Wilda gives him a loud, smacking great kiss on the cheek.)
 ATHELSTAN Adieu, one and all, adieu.
 ODELIA Farewell, father.
 ELVINA Goodbye, Athelstan, goodbye.
(Exit Athelstan and the two servants)
 NELDA Now you clear off, you little gutter-snipe. Go back to your hovel and get weaving.
 ODELIA You can't talk to her like that. She's my friend.
 ELVINA It's alright, Odelia, I can see I am not welcome here. I'll go.
(Exit Elvina.)
 ODELIA Come back tomorrow, Elvina, please do.
 ORVA *(To Odelia.)* And now **you** have work to do. There are dishes to wash...
 NELDA And pans to clean...
 WILDA And floors to scrub.

ORVA
NELDA
WILDA

Sheets to hang...
And carpets to beat...
And silver to polish.

SONG 2, Chorus, Call Odelia

1 Monday morning wash day, who will wash the sheets, and
Who will do the ironing, who will make things neat?
Who will press the table cloths, who will beat the rugs, and
Who will scrub the floor and who will fill the washing tubs?

Call Odelia, she can wash and scrub and beat and shine and,
She can fold and press and darn and sweep and clean and iron.
Floors to scrub and shirts to rub, piles of washing in the tub.
Beds to make and cakes to bake, then tea to brew and serve the stew.

2 Nearly time for dinner who will wash the greens, and
Who will peel the carrots, who will slice the beans?
Who will scrub the table-top, who will carve the lamb? and
Who will stir the cooking pot and chop and boil the ham?

Call Odelia, she can cook, the table must be laid, and
She can fill the water jugs, the pudding must be made.
Floors to scrub and shirts to rub, piles of washing in the tub.
Beds to make and cakes to bake, then tea to brew and serve the stew.

End of Scene