

PRODUCTION LIBRETTO

**MAD MEG**  
AN OPERA LIBRETTO  
by  
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CHORUS

On a farm.

On a farm  
In a valley

On a farm  
In a valley  
By a river

On a farm  
In a valley  
By a river  
Lived two sisters

With their father.

One was called Martha  
The other one was called Meg

Martha was warm as the sun  
Meg was moody as the moon  
Martha was happy in the day  
While Meg she loved the night  
Between the two of them  
Things worked out all right.

Through the day  
When the sun shone  
The sisters would work on the farm

And at night time  
Over the hills the moon would come  
On the farm  
In the valley  
By the river  
Martha would play  
Meg would dance  
And their father would beat his drum

Then one day

When their father was old  
He called them to him.  
And told them he would die

MEG

No.

FATHER

It happens, Meg.  
Don't cry  
Everything that lives  
Must die  
You cannot stop this happening  
However hard you try

SCENE TWO

Time Passes  
Time Passes

Autumn Winter Spring And Summer  
Time passes  
Time Passes  
Time is its own drummer

MEG

Meg worked the farm  
Digging Sowing  
Planting Growing  
Cutting Keeping  
Eating sleeping  
Every day ended much too soon  
At night she'd sleep beneath the moon.

MARTHA

Martha worked the house  
Cooking baking  
Sewing making  
Washing mending  
Never ending  
Sometimes weeping  
Eating sleeping  
Was there a time when she'd had fun  
These days she never saw the sun.

Time Passes  
Time Passes  
Spring Summer Autumn Winter  
Time Passes  
Time Passes  
The sisters life begins to splinter

In the fields Meg remembered how to sing  
But Martha never ever played  
She couldn't remember how  
She'd forgot.  
Martha wept, Meg laughed  
Meg felt free, Martha trapped  
Meg was happy with her lot  
Martha  
Was not.

Time Passes  
Time passes  
Winter Spring Summer Autumn  
Time Passes  
Time passes

And then one day a stranger comes  
A stranger, with a different drum  
Simon the stranger  
Bringing change and danger

### SCENE THREE

(SIMON the stranger comes. He is dressed in some way as a knight. Maybe he doesn't need the Full Clanking Monty, but he should have something to say knight and I would like it to be quite shiny. He also carries a drum. He is very tired from

walking a long way. Initially he just stands there swaying.  
MEG has been working in the fields. She looks at him.)

MEG A shining silver man!  
Hallo.

SIMON (Says nothing)

MEG Silver like the moon.  
Are you the man in the moon?  
  
(SIMON collapses.)

SIMON Man in the Moon...

MARTHA Is he dead?

MEG (Goes and listen to his breathing.)  
No.  
He's not dead  
He's a bit of all right though, isn't he?

MARTHA He'll have to go.

MEG No.  
He has a drum  
Like father.

MARTHA Make him go away  
He can't stay.

SIMON Tired. Tired. Tired. Tired.

MARTHA I'm sorry but you just can't stay  
Be on your way.

MEG He can't hear what you say  
He'll have to stay.  
He's gorgeous

MARTHA Haven't I got enough to do  
Looking after me and you?

MEG I promise I'll look after him  
You won't have to do a thing.

SIMON Water. Water, Water, Water.

MARTHA He needs a drink.

MEG What do you think?

MARTHA Trouble.  
That's what I think.

(MARTHA goes)

(MEG takes his armour off, and his drum, and washes him.  
She sings)

MEG (He's out of it.)  
Did the moon send you to me?

SIMON Man in the moon

MEG We'll see.  
  
Let me take the drum you carry  
Lay it on the ground  
Sleep away the noise of battle  
The river is the only sound.  
  
Let me wash the mud away  
Bathe away the pain  
Now your marching days are over  
You'll never go to war again.  
  
Did the moon send you to me?

SIMON Tired

MEG We'll see.  
  
(MARTHA returns. With water.)

MEG He's asleep now.

MARTHA What'll we do with him?

MEG I'll look after him.  
I'll make him a bed in the barn.  
  
(She goes)

SIMON (Waking. Sees MARTHA)  
Hallo

MARTHA Hallo.  
I've brought you some water.

SIMON You're beautiful.

MARTHA Beautiful? Me?

SIMON Golden like the sun.  
I just want to look at you.

MARTHA Look at me?

SIMON Can I stay here?

MARTHA No you must go

SIMON Oh.

MARTHA I can't stand the life we live here  
My life is like writing

With water on air  
Every morning when the sun comes up  
It's not there.  
What's the world like?

SIMON Full of trouble  
It's far away.  
And that's where it should stay.

MARTHA Nothing much changes 'round here  
No one comes no one goes  
Sometimes it rains,  
Sometimes it snows  
Always quiet  
Never loud.  
I'm like the sun behind a cloud  
I want to go where you have been  
And see the things that you have seen  
I want to do, to see, to go, to be.  
Free.  
I want to be free.

SIMON Don't go  
Just be  
Here with me.  
Come here.  
Stay here.

MARTHA My sister thinks you're the man in the moon.

SIMON Maybe I am.

MARTHA I don't think so.  
My sister wants you to stay.

SIMON What about you?  
Can I stay?

MARTHA For a day  
Then you must be on your way.

MEG (Returns) I've made you somewhere to sleep in the barn.  
Can he stay?

MARTHA He can stay.

TRIO

SIMON No war  
Any more  
I'll never fight another fight  
Never see those dreadful sights  
Maybe yet  
I'll forget

MARTHA Not bored  
Any more  
I'll see things I've never seen  
Go to places that I've never been  
Alone

On my own

MEG Him and me  
You'll see  
Out in every kind of weather  
The two of us will work together  
No fuss  
Just us

SCENE FOUR

CHORUS Time passes  
Time passes  
The river keeps on flowing  
Time passes  
Time passes  
Simon the stranger isn't going

Time passes  
Time passes  
As the river flows  
Time passes  
Time passes  
Simon's love for Martha grows

SCENE FOUR  
(They're working. Or it's evening and MEG is gazing at the moon.)

MEG (She looks at SIMON)  
You're beautiful

SIMON Me?

MEG Yes.  
I used to look at the moon  
Now I could just look at you.

Come here. Come here  
Stand there. Stand there.  
No.

Over there.

(She stares at him. He stares back.)

SIMON It's raining

MEG It always rains when I'm happy.  
Or sometimes the sun comes out.

Come here. Come here. Come here.

SIMON Here?

MEG No, here. Here.  
By me.

Closer.  
Much closer.  
Closer than that.  
Better.

MARTHA                    You play the drum.

MEG                        Play the drum for us.

SIMON                     No.

MEG                        Play the drum.

SIMON                     No sticks

MEG                        Have our father's.

MARTHA                   Meg. No.

MEG                        He must have our fathers.  
Give him the sticks  
We keep one each.  
The drum sticks were our father's  
I've got one  
The other's Martha's

MARTHA                   No.

MEG                        Give him the sticks.

MARTHA                   No.

MEG                        Give him the sticks.

MARTHA                   No.

MEG                        You can have mine.

SIMON                     No.

MEG                        Why not?

SIMON                     What is it in the hearts of men  
That's beating with the drum?  
It asks for us to follow  
So we come.

                                  What is it in the hearts of men  
That's beating with the drum?  
Many march away, but back come  
Only some  
So changed we can't return where  
We came from

                                  What is it in the hearts of men  
That's beating with the drum?  
I once could laugh and cry  
Now I'm numb

                                  What is it in the hearts of men



That's beating with the drum?  
I'm not sure that I like what  
I've become.

MEG Do you like me?

SIMON Yes.  
And Martha.  
I like Martha too.  
It's raining again.

MEG How much do you like me?

SIMON I don't know.

MEG A drop of rain much  
Or a wide ocean?  
Or a glass of water  
Or a lake?  
How much?  
How much?

SIMON Was that thunder?

MEG Tell me.

SIMON A lot.

MEG How much?  
A bucket full?  
A waterfall?

SIMON A river?

MEG A river?  
  
A river that gets bigger  
And bigger  
And bigger  
Till it gets to the sea.  
That'll do  
That'll do.  
That'll do for me.

SIMON It's snowing.  
Now it's snowing

MEG It does that.

SIMON Is that to do with you too?  
The snow?

MEG No. Don't be daft  
It's winter.  
Winter just happens  
Whether I like it or not.

Do like dancing.

SIMON Yes.  
I like dancing.

MEG Good  
Now's your chance.  
'Cos you're coming to a dance.  
With me.

SIMON (TO MARTHA)  
Are you going?

MEG 'Course she is.  
Everybody in the village is.

#### SCENE FIVE - THE DANCE

(I think this should be as big and wild a hooley as we can manage)

Keep in step, keep in step  
Altogether  
Keep in step  
Yesterday  
Now  
Tomorrow  
Forever  
Everybody Altogether

Round the room  
Turn around  
Down one side  
Wave your hands  
Nod your head  
Breathe in  
Breathe out

Keep in step, keep in step  
Altogether  
Keep in step  
Sun  
Moon  
Never  
Soon  
Everybody in the room

(I'm totally foxed as to how we pull this off, but I'm sure there must be a way. I sort of imagine the dance being quite wild and wooly and very high, then the three characters coming into it, and everything going a bit still and strange for a while as if they're in bubble. - Just like West Side Story. But how the fuck we do it with so few people? Maybe a sharp snap from anonymous chorus to characters and back.

DANCING

There is a section where SIMON goes from MARTHA to MEG and back again, dancing. MARTHA takes some persuading. is very tentative at first, but refinds her love of dancing. With MARTHA the dance is delicate beautiful and sexy. They dance well together. With MEG its gallumphing and vigorous and extravagant. Toes get stepped on. MEG is definitely in the lead, practically dragging SIMON around. Maybe leaping and getting caught by him in odd positions. There should be a point at which MEG clocks that something is going on between SIMON and MARTHA. And she drags SIMON away.

(Does she bring the whole thing to a halt? Then try to start it up again. As from this point on the gaze of the lookers becomes important this needs dealing with)

MEG Do you like her?

SIMON Yes.

MEG How much do you like her?

MARTHA Meg. No.

MEG A drop of rain much  
Or a wide ocean?  
Or a glass of water  
Or a lake?  
How much?  
How much?

MEG Tell me.

SIMON A lot.

MEG How much?  
A bucket full?  
A waterfall?  
A river?

That gets bigger  
And bigger  
And bigger  
Till it gets to the sea.

SIMON An ocean.

MARTHA An ocean?  
Me?

SIMON An ocean  
So wide you can't cross it  
So deep it has no bottom  
So dark you can't see through it

MEG An ocean  
So wide you can't cross it  
So deep it has no bottom  
So dark you can't see through it  
That'll do

That'll do.  
That'll do for me.

(SIMON and MARTHA leave.)

MEG (She dances on her own. It is not a pretty sight. She becomes increasingly uncomfortable. She stops.)

CHORUS As they laughed  
A single tear appeared in Meg's eye

They laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed  
And Meg began to cry

And as they laughed  
And as Meg cried  
The sky now wept as well  
And outside in the valley  
The rain just fell.

MEG A curse upon you  
Everyone  
All the women  
All the men.  
I turn my back upon you all  
You'll never see me cry again  
No one will make me cry again.  
The only thing I'll feel is hate  
And you will meet a dreadful fate

(MEG goes)

CHORUS Time passes  
Time passes  
Outside the rain had stopped  
Time passes  
Time passes  
It didn't let fall another drop

MEG Meg now lived upon the moor  
Sleeping on the cold hard floor.  
She built a dam  
Boulder breaking  
Shoulders aching  
Stiff bones,  
Piling stones  
Too angry for singing  
Too bitter to dance  
If Simon had no love to give her  
She'd make a wall and stop the river.  
Hugging to her heartfelt grudge  
She built a dam that wouldn't budge

Time passes  
Simon married Martha  
Time passes  
Became mother and father

Time passes  
Sometimes the baby would cry  
But no rain fell from a clear blue sky

SIMON

Simon worked the farm  
Digging Sowing  
Planting Growing  
Cutting Keeping  
Eating sleeping  
Happy with his wife and daughter  
But sometimes Just sometimes  
He'd worry about the lack of water

MARTHA

Martha worked the house again  
Cooking baking  
Sewing making  
Washing mending  
Never ending  
Sometimes weeping  
Eating sleeping  
Was there a time when she'd had fun  
These days she never saw the sun.  
Why it happened who can say  
But came the day that Martha went away

SIMON

Time passes  
Simon's strong will now had broke  
Time passes  
He and his daughter hardly spoke  
Time passes  
Nothing was the same as it had been before  
Time passes

The villagers now locked their doors  
Afraid of Mad Meg on the Moor  
To their children they sometimes said  
Mad Meg'll get you if you don't go to bed  
They'd point at the moon up in the sky  
Look there's Mad Meg's eye  
Mad Meg made the river dry

CHORUS CHILDREN (to Sprog)

Mad Meg made the river dry  
You Go and find out why  
You Get back our water  
Go on you're her sister's daughter

(MEG on the moor, building her dam, or sitting looking at the moon.)

(SPROG arrives)

MEG

Who are you?  
Why have you come?

SPROG

(Doesn't reply)

MEG

Come here.

SPROG (Doesn't move)

MEG Come here.  
Come here.  
I won't eat you.

SPROG (Clearly thinks she will)

MEG You think I will eat you?

SPROG (nods)

MEG Well maybe I will.  
How would you taste?  
Bitter from the look on your face  
What do you want?

SPROG (Water.)

MEG Water.  
I bet you do.  
Are they all thirsty too?

SPROG (Yes.)

MEG Good.  
They laughed at me  
They laughed  
They laughed and laughed  
And now it's just too late.  
The only thing I feel is hate

SPROG (I hate them too.)

MEG You hate them too?  
You do?  
Who are you?  
Don't look at me.  
I never asked you to this place  
The moon's the only one who sees my face.

Who are you?  
I know that violin, that drum  
And that stick.  
Who are you?  
And why have you come?

SPROG (by echoing MARTHA's playing she reveals that MARTHA was her mother)

MEG You're Martha's girl?  
(she looks at her closely)  
Martha's girl.  
Mum?

SPROG (Gone.)

MEG Gone?  
Gone. Where?

SPROG (Shrugs.)

MEG She never liked the farm  
Dad?

SPROG (Sad.)

MEG Sad, eh? Sad.

SPROG (Yes. Very, very sad.)

MEG What about you?

SPROG (No reply)

MEG You? You? What about you?  
Mum gone. Dad sad.  
What about you?

SPROG (On my own. Nobody wants me.)

MEG Nobody wants you?

SPROG (Doesn't reply)

MEG Nobody?

SPROG (No.)

MEG What do you want?

SPROG (Can I stay here?)

MEG No.

SPROG (Just looks)

MEG No. No. No. NO. NO.  
You can't stay.  
You  
Can't  
Stay.

SPROG (Just looks)

MEG No.  
Don't look at me like that.  
Don't look at me at all

SPROG (Why?)

MEG See this dam  
Behind it is a lake of tears.  
Every rock's an insult  
Every drop's a tear  
You know how long it took to build  
It took years, and years and years and years.  
Let them know that

Make them think  
Every time  
They want a drink.

SPROG

(As bad  
As my dad)

(SPROG turns to go)

MEG

No  
Wait.  
Take this message, Simon's daughter  
Yes the village can have water.  
This is the message I give you  
This is what they have to do.

MEG

Simon the stranger  
Make him appear  
Simon the Stranger  
I want him here

Simon the stranger  
Bring him to me  
Simon the Stranger  
Tell him he's to marry me

And the village has to come  
They're all invited too  
But no one laughs

One single smile  
No one drinks  
He marries me.

#### THE WEDDING

MEG

You came.

SIMON

Yes.

MEG

You're not the man in the moon

SIMON

No.  
I'm just a rusty man  
Rattling like an old tin can.

MEG

I thought the moon had sent you to me.  
Nobody laugh.  
I want you to marry me.

SIMON

I know.

MEG

I'm old and tired  
And I want to be loved.

SIMON

I know

MEG

You'll marry me



Even though you don't love me.

SIMON If you give us the water.

MEG Right  
Let's get on with it.  
Will you marry me.

(SIMON is about to say yes when SPROG drums madly.)

MEG Will you marry me?  
  
(The same thing happens again.)

SPROG (Confronts her, drumming)

MEG I can't marry him can I?

SPROG (Shakes her head)

MEG The moon didn't send him to me, did she?

SPROG (Shakes her head)

MEG Oh he was so beautiful  
I thought he was the one  
But I belonged under the moon  
And he beneath the blazing sun

I thought I'd love forever  
It withered all too soon  
For he belonged under the sun  
And I beneath the staring moon

I thought my troubles were over  
They'd only just begun.  
For I belonged under the moon  
And he beneath the blazing sun

And so I built my wall of stone  
And sang a different tune  
For he belonged under the sun  
And I beneath the staring moon

And now the river has dried  
And now my wall is done  
But I belonged under the moon  
And he beneath the blazing sun

And now his armour's rusted  
And our youth has gone  
For I belonged under the moon  
And he beneath the blazing sun

And now his armour's rusted  
And our youth has gone  
I've been too long under the moon

And he beneath the blazing sun

You can have your water  
And you love your daughter.

SPROG

Soon it is too late  
A life can waste away on hate.

(Simon & Sprog make peace)

CHORUS

The water flowed down the valley  
First a trickle  
Then a drop  
Then more and more and more and more  
It wouldn't stop  
It started to become a flood  
Of water stones and mud

A dreadful flood  
Of pent up tears  
The pain and grief of years and years  
Flooding out  
And flowing down  
Straight upon the little town.

CHORUS

They stood there, children, women, men.  
The village lay beneath a lake  
All of them, must start again  
Everybody was there  
But one  
Meg  
Was gone.

Meg was never found  
The villagers thought she must have drowned.  
Not everybody was so sure  
They say she's still seen on the moor.

But the children say that she has gone  
Up to the moon where she belongs.

End