



adverse
camber
productions

DREAMING THE NIGHT FIELD

a legend of Wales



An **Adverse Camber** production

The logo for Adverse Camber Productions is a red, stylized shape resembling a wave or a ribbon, positioned in the top right corner. Inside this shape, the words "adverse", "camber", and "productions" are stacked vertically in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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DREAMING THE NIGHT FIELD

a legend of Wales

Created and performed by

Michael Harvey Storyteller

Lynne Denman Singer

Stacey Blythe Composer / Musician

Commissioned by Adverse Camber in association
with Felin Uchaf, Cardiff University School of Welsh
and Aberystwyth Arts Centre

**The performance takes place in two halves
with an interval.**

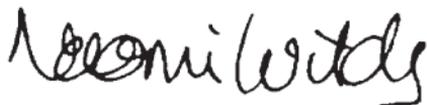
WELCOME TO TODAY'S PERFORMANCE AND THANK YOU FOR COMING!

The source story which inspires this performance is one of the earliest works of literature found in Britain. *The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* is one of four tales, written in Middle Welsh, set in a semi-legendary Britain in which characters and events cross between different realms of this world and the otherworld - leaving marks on the landscape.

The written versions of these stories, found mainly in two medieval manuscripts, the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest*, were based on much earlier oral traditions. The stories have continued to inspire new creations and interpretations by artists working across many different artforms up to the present day. They also stoke debate and discussion— see more overleaf and on our website from Professor Sioned Davies.

While part of a rich literary and oral heritage, we've also found the story to be eerily contemporary. We'd love to know your reactions, so please do get in touch or come and talk to us afterwards. Huge thanks to all the many individuals and organisations who have helped us during the piece's creative journey – see page 26 for more details.

We hope you enjoy it!



Naomi Wilds Producer

**Michael, Lynne and Stacey
working at Tomen y Mur**





Introducing *The Mabinogion*

I have always loved listening to stories, ever since the monthly family trips to West Wales to visit elderly aunts in my father's beloved home village of Pennal. The journey would be punctuated by local tales as certain features in the landscape came into view. Even now I can't pass these places without recalling the tales connected with them. And then, on 'snow-days', when very few teachers could make the icy journey to school, my headmaster father would keep 350 young children spellbound in the school hall, telling them tales of Bendigeidfran, Efnysien, Pwyll, Culhwch – tales of *The Mabinogion*. It was only later, in University, that I learned to appreciate these stories in their original medieval Welsh guise, and began to understand why they were pieces to be performed.

So what exactly is *The Mabinogion*? The term is probably a scribal error for *mabinogi*, derived from the Welsh word *mab* meaning 'son, boy'; the general consensus is that its original meaning was 'youth' or 'story of youth', and that finally it meant no more than 'tale' or 'story'. Despite many common themes, the eleven tales were not conceived as an organic group, and are certainly not the work of a single author.

Moreover, unlike the poetry of the period, the 'authors' of our tales are anonymous, suggesting that there was no sense of 'ownership' and that the texts were viewed as part of the collective memory. Their roots lie in oral tradition, and as such they reflect a collaboration between the oral and literary cultures, giving us an intriguing insight into the world of the medieval storyteller, the *cyfarwydd*. Performance features such as episodic structure, repetition, verbal formulae, and dialogue are an integral part of their fabric, partly because the 'authors' inherited pre-literary modes of narrating, and partly because in a culture where very few could read and write, tales and poems would be performed before a listening audience; even when a text was committed to parchment, one can assume that the parchment would become 'interactive' as a general lack of literacy demanded public readings.

With the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* we are in a familiar geographical landscape and a society apparently pre-dating any Norman influence. Indeed, the action is located in a pre-Christian Wales, where the main protagonists are mythological figures. Even though it is doubtful whether their significance was understood by a medieval audience, the mythological themes make for fascinating stories: journeys to an otherworld paradise where time stands still and where mortals do not age; the cauldron of rebirth which revives dead warriors but takes away their speech; shape-shifting where an unfaithful wife is transformed into an owl. But these are more than mere tales of magic and suspense. All the tales of *The Mabinogion* provided their audience with ethical dilemmas concerning moral, political and legal issues. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* – it is they that convey most effectively the appropriate moral behaviour that is essential for a society to survive.

The Mabinogion is rightly regarded as a classic. It is particularly relevant that there is an increasing interest in the tales amid today's storytelling community. We know very little as to how they would have been performed – whether there would have been musical accompaniment, for example. Adverse Camber's fascinating interpretation of the *Fourth Branch* gives us an insight into that medieval world, and shows how the written text can come alive in a truly theatrical experience.

Sioned Davies

For an English translation of the tales together with an introduction and notes, see Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

For a modern Welsh version of the text, look for *Y Mabinogion* by Dafydd and Rhiannon Ifans published by Gomer

Read more of Sioned's insights into the *Fourth Branch* and *The Mabinogion* at www.adversecamber.org



*Bum yn wenfflam
ac wedyn llwch tu
hwnt i bob dolur*

I was gleaming fire
when I came into
the world

**From *The Black Book
of Carmarthen***

Inspirational Sources

Dreaming the Night Field began life in conversations while touring ***Hunting the Giant's Daughter***, these artists' previous show together. The *Fourth Branch* was mentioned, and wouldn't let go.

Plans sparked to life following Aberystwyth Storytelling Festival's inspirational Y Mabinogi project in 2015, curated by Peter Stevenson. This featured the many riches of Wales' storytelling community telling all four branches of the *Mabinogi*, in two groups of three women and two groups of three men, over the course of a single day.

Following this, the artists spent time with director Paula Crutchlow, storyteller Dafydd Davies-Hughes, artist Maria Hayes, designer Sophia Clist and voice specialist Pauline Down and at Felin Uchaf on the Llŷn peninsula, visiting sites where the story happened, forging spears, sharing music and stories. Fragments of ancient Welsh poems mixed with the raw materials for iron, and sheep's wool. Lines on sheets of paper connected up all the animals, plants and insects in the source texts. Plastic and beach debris jostled for space with fragments of poetry, spells and Welsh psalm singing traditions canu pwnc.

Creative work meshed these influences and the artists' original work together in Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and back at Felin Uchaf. The piece is continuing to be made through performances.

Creative work at Felin Uchaf





Nid unffurf yw'r byd

The world is not of one form

From *The Black Book of Carmarthen*

The Music of *Dreaming the Night Field*

Stacey Blythe and Lynne Denman have sung together in *Ffynnon* for over 20 years, drawing on harmonic foundations deeply rooted in the traditions of the British isles, blended with the effervescence of jazz and blues influences. These textures are the springboard for Stacey's evocative, original compositions which provide the distinct and sometimes unsettling aural landscape through which this story of betrayal, revenge, love and honour play out.

Some of the musical ingredients for this piece leapt out from the second we said 'the *Fourth Branch*'. The opening song *Mae'r ddaear yn glasu/the world is greening* is a Welsh folk song which evokes the power of nature. For me, it is echoed in the story when Blodeuwedd sees Gronw for the first time, looking out to the woods.



Breuddwyd was another must have, a song Lynne wrote, recorded on our 3rd Ffynnon album *Adar Gwyltton* (Wild Birds). *Y Gwŷdd* or *The Wood / The Loom*, felt perfect for the moment when Gwydion's magical storytelling casts a spell on the soldiers of Pryderi's court.

Other elements emerged as we worked. *Canu pwnc* is a Welsh chapel tradition of chanting psalms, still practiced in Mynachlog-ddu in Pembrokeshire. Repetitive and mesmerising, its style influenced our many sung spells of making when substances are magically transformed from one form into another. Each spell is treated differently as the situation in the story is unique each time. A song phrase from the *Black Book of Carmarthen* is repeated each time there is a transformation. Poetic forms such as the Englyn, with internal rhyme and alliteration, are also set to original music.

Sometimes music subtly reinforces connections or differences between characters. There's a blend of original and traditional Welsh harp tunes for Math and Gwydion. Gwydion gets the slip jig; it's in the same key as Math as they're related, but Gwydion's tune is twisty and syncopated.

The two tunes weave in and out of each other musically as the characters do, dramatically. My arrangement of Arianrhod's signature tune is a stately elegant waltz, mirroring her strong independence, established in her own court and life.

There are sections which deliberately push at the edges, causing our ears to seek to resolve dissonance mirroring some of the more uncomfortable elements in the story, which also don't resolve.

One of our guiding principles has been equality between the three of us – there are times when Lynne takes over the storytelling in song, or when Michael's drum rhythms drive the action forward, or where I'm changing the landscape with what I play. Just as we experimented with forging iron out of natural materials at Felin Uchaf, so our musical themes and choices manifested as we continued to work with them. Musically I still keep some moments free for improvisation in our live performances which means that the show is utterly unique to each venue.

Stacey Blythe

Dreaming the Night Field is full of magic, extremes and twists and turns, and so are its characters, here's a little about some of them:

NORTH WALES/GWYNEDD

Math fab Mathonwy is the lord of Gwynedd and the story begins with him. Math is a fair and just lord. He also has magical powers.

Goewin is a young woman with a distinctive role in Math's court of making sure the king's feet do not touch the ground except in times of war. This role can only be performed by a virgin.

Gwydion, nephew to Math is a master magician and said to be the best storyteller the world has ever known. He is given the task of walking the realm's boundaries to ensure all is well. He does this with his brother Gilfaethwy, as Math's feet are not allowed to touch the ground.

Gilfaethwy is Gwydion's brother. He has a secret longing for Goewin which he is scared to voice in case Math discovers this.

Arianrhod is a powerful, independent woman who lives in her own castle away from Math's court. She tries to keep herself separate, but is drawn back into the action of the story. She is Gwydion's and Gilfaethwy's sister.

Lieu Llaw Gyffes is born in strange and magical circumstances during the story. He is related to Gwydion and Arianrhod. He is a well-known hero of Welsh mythology and both a warrior and magician. Many places in Wales are named after him.

*Mab sydd
yn disgwyl
beunydd cael
nef ar ddaear
newydd*

If anyone asks
who has written
these verses,
tell them it is
one who daily
looks for heaven
on a new earth

From Y Gwŷdd

Blodeuwedd is a woman made out of flowers to be Lleu's wife. Her story is one of the most frequently re-told and illustrated elements of the *Fourth Branch*.

Gronw Pebr is a nobleman and hunter who lives near Tomen y Mur where Lleu and Blodeuwedd have their court.

SOUTH WALES/DYFED

Pryderi is the lord of Dyfed and a major character in the other three branches of the *Mabinogi*. From his father's previously related adventures in the underworld, Pryderi has animals which no one else has seen in Wales, pigs, which are said to taste amazing.

Why all the sticks?

During early phases of work on *Dreaming the Night Field* we talked about having elements on stage that could move around, be three-dimensional and link, rather than separate, the performers from the audience. So not just a backdrop, then. But what?

At Lynne's house, once I'd finished gazing at the beautiful view she has of the Teifi valley I started to thumb through one of her Andy Goldsworthy books and stumbled across pictures of his work with the French dance company Ballet Atlantique where the dancers incorporated wood into their work and thought, 'Why not?'

At Aberystwyth Arts Centre, I bunked off for half an hour and filled my car with as many branches as I could and, what with the wet Welsh weather, I actually collected a lot more nature than I had originally intended.

Strangely, no one batted an eyelid as I hauled this wet, smelly, moss-covered heap of wood into the lovely circular studio in the arts centre. We played with the sticks for hours and knew that they were great playmates but we didn't really know any good (or safe!) stick games.

Enter visual artist and stick-tamer Sophia Clist. She herded sticks into the yard beside her old Dartmoor farmhouse and with artist maker Barnaby Stone she grafted branches to each other in new configurations. We set them up in rehearsal spaces in Cardiff and Merthyr and bit by bit we got to know our woody teammates in a series of trial and error attempts at putting people, sticks, words and music together.

It's not as easy as it sounds. However we persevered and slowly the sticks began to get into the game and actually started showing off. Without much apparent effort on their part, and with just a little help from us, the sticks became a sea shore, a mountain range on the Llyn peninsula, wounded and dead soldiers, deer and wolves. And not only that, they also brought a spaciousness and depth to the

complex and contradictory emotions in the story we are trying to tell. We never try and illustrate anything, it's just that we can't stop ourselves from projecting likeness, attitude, emotion and intention onto the sticks as the story unfolds.

Don't ask me how they do it, all I know is that by bringing what is outside inside and spending enough time with it, a level of communication is reached where you don't need to grapple with yourself trying to find a way to express all the weirdness and complexity in the story because, if you pay attention, you'll find that the sticks are right there, showing you exactly what it's all about.

Michael Harvey

Plastics are Changing our DNA

– Director Paula Crutchlow writes about how her Cultural Geography research into the urgent global issue of plastic pollution has influenced her work on *Dreaming the Night Field*. Read more about this at www.adversecambor.org

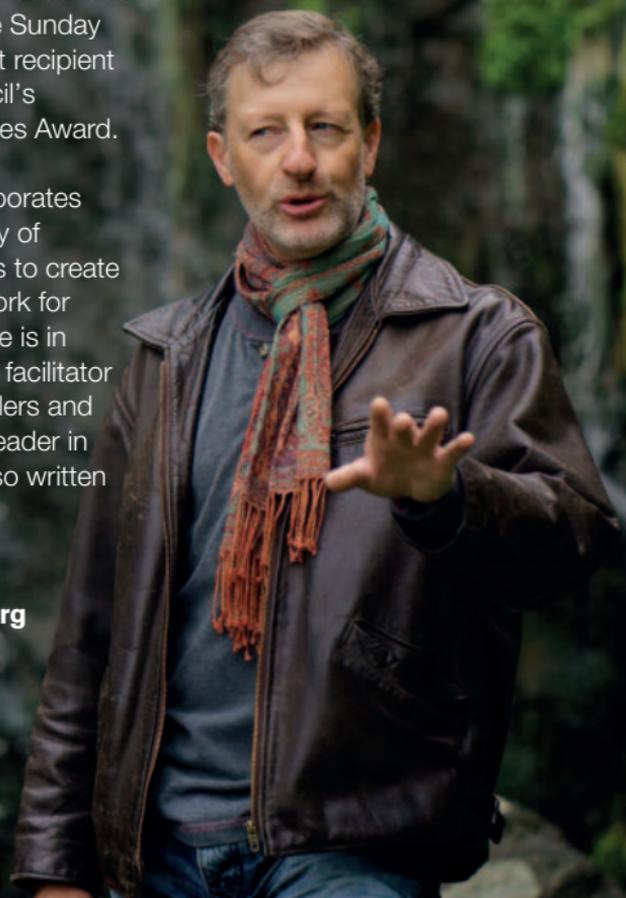


Michael Harvey

Michael Harvey is widely acknowledged as one of the UK's leading contemporary storytellers. Based in Cardiff, Michael tells traditional stories from Wales, the Celtic countries and beyond, appearing regularly at major international festivals in Britain, Europe, North and South America. His storytelling has been described as "mesmerising" by the Sunday Times and he is a recent recipient of the Welsh Arts Council's prestigious Creative Wales Award.

Michael frequently collaborates with artists from a variety of disciplines and countries to create new, groundbreaking work for a range of audiences. He is in increasing demand as a facilitator for performance storytellers and an inventive workshop leader in schools. Michael has also written a number of books and audiobooks.

www.michaelharvey.org



Lynne Denman

Lynne Denman's repertoire includes songs deeply rooted in the traditions, rhythms, languages and landscapes of the Celtic countries. Lynne has sung traditional and new Welsh, English and French songs for audiences on five continents. She records and tours as a founder member of folk ensemble Ffynnon.

A skilled heritage interpreter, Lynne researched, wrote and performed music for a major project in North Wales: Tywysogion Gwynedd / The Princes of Gwynedd.

www.fffynnon.org



Stacey Blythe

Stacey Blythe is a classically trained composer and performer and has written for, and performed with WNO, National Dance Theatre Wales, The Rubicon, Theatre Ffynnon, National Orchestra of Wales, Swansea Arts Festival, The Chainmakers Festival, North Wales Arts Festival and National Theatre of Wales.

She is an associate musician with English National Ballet, works with Live Music Now as a mentor and runs workshops in traditional music, harp, accordion, voice, and songwriting.

She performs solo as well as with Ffynnon and Elfen, has performed on the Orient Express, played for Stephen Sondheim, and sung with Billy Bragg and Michelle Shocked. She has played (with her students from RWCMD) for Elizabeth Taylor, Shirley Bassey and the Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace.

Stacey is an MD, singing and repertoire coach in the Drama School, at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

www.staceyblythe.com



*Ynteu Wydyon
goreu kyuarwyd
yn y byt oed.*

And Gwydion was
the best storyteller
in the world.

*Hudodd gwch
hudodd hwylliau*

*Hudodd ledr
hudodd garrai*

He conjured a
magical boat and
shoes out of
seaweed

Creative Team

Director: Paula Crutchlow

Paula Crutchlow is an independent artist and performance maker who has been working as a director and dramaturg with storytellers, musicians, dance artists and new writing projects for over twenty years. Alongside this, her work with artist collective Blind Ditch creates collaborative and unexpected happenings in everyday spaces; often using participatory approaches and digital media to engage publics as thinking citizens and active spectators. Paula is currently Artistic Adviser for Adverse Camber and is a board member of B-side multimedia arts festival. As a scholar and educator she was an Associate Lecturer in Theatre at Dartington College of Arts, Devon 2001-10, and is now an ESRC funded Doctoral Researcher in Cultural Geography at the University of Exeter.

www.blindditch.org

Designer: Sophia Clist

From a background of sculpture, Sophia creates installations, sets and objects for performers and audiences to inhabit, manipulate and transform. Much of her work is collaborative and interactive, working with artists in dance, theatre, music, film, and with the general public.

Recent work includes Parallelist – Clay Gold & Laura Moody; Stretch at Exeter Cathedral – Sophia Clist with Nick Burge; The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk – Kneehigh Theatre; Get Happy – Told by an Idiot; 16 Singers – Katherine Morley; Life Forces – Jane Mason; In This Place – Pentabus Theatre and Hands Full/Phenomenal People – Fuel. From 1998-2008, Sophia was Associate Artist to Theatre-Rites, designing touring & site-specific shows for young audiences. Sophia was shortlisted for the Jerwood Choreographic Research Project II in 2016.

www.sophiaclist.co.uk

Lighting and Sound Design: Gethin Stacey

Gethin Stacey runs Sound Hire Wales, supplying high quality sound and lighting for events large and small across the UK. This is his fourth production with Adverse Camber, providing responsive sound design and lighting. Sound Hire Wales is based in Carmarthen, supplies equipment manufactured in Wales and works with bilingual sound engineers.

www.soundhirewales.co.uk

Producer: Naomi Wilds

Naomi Wilds founded Adverse Camber in 2006 and has produced the company's national tours to date, raising substantial funds for artistic, audience and organisational development, expanding the Adverse Camber team in recent years to include associate producers and marketing specialists dedicated to bringing excellent performances to broader and more diverse audiences.

In 2009, Naomi was one of four East Midlands producers to receive a bursary from Arts Council England recognising her work. Naomi studied English Literature at the University of Leeds and specialised in literature development from 1999-2008 as part of the East Midlands Literature Network.



Adverse Camber is an independent production company, based amongst the historic mills of Cromford, Derbyshire. The company acts as a catalyst, bringing artists, audiences, partners, venues, and funders together to create electrically charged performance encounters with storytelling and music.

Adverse Camber is inspired by the imaginative material of these rich, oral tales, the artists who work with them and audiences who relish the experience of being transported into the worlds they evoke. We believe in shared experiences between artists and audiences, so live encounters are at the heart of everything we do.

Each Adverse Camber tour starts with a creative process, in which the originating artists have space to work with a director, producer and/or designer who listen to their ambitions for the piece and help explore those possibilities, provoking discussion and offering their own ideas and expertise.

Adverse Camber is passionate about taking risks on behalf of creative work and working with artists who are reaching for new horizons. This programme illuminates the source material which has gone into creating this piece, and the detailed, in-depth work of combining respect for traditions with an enthusiasm for finding new pathways in contemporary culture.

This piece has been made possible thanks to support from a suite of truly amazing partners - Felin Uchaf, a visionary social enterprise on the Llŷn Peninsula, special thanks to Dafydd Davies-Hughes, Cardiff University School of Welsh, special thanks to Sioned Davies and also thanks to the twin brilliances of Aberystwyth Arts Centre /Gill Ogden and Aberystwyth Storytelling Festival / Peter Stevenson, plus David Ambrose at Beyond the Border Storytelling Festival.

Thanks also go to Ceri Charles-Durrant, Rob Whitehead, Nick Bache, Gavin Repton and Becka Rickard as well as all the people who supported the creative process with input and feedback along the way.

We hope you enjoy this performance, and join us for more Adverse Camber tours. Please like us and comment on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and sign up for our newsletters to get first news of more shows coming soon.

We are grateful to Arts Council Wales, Welsh Government/National Lottery and Arts Council England/National Lottery, our venue partners, and everyone in the growing Adverse Camber team.

Adverse Camber Team:

Producer **Naomi Wilds**

Artistic Advisor **Paula Crutchlow**

Marketing Associates

Jenny Babenko

and **Palmer Squared**

PR Associate **Angharad Wynne**

Associate Producer

Louisa Davies

Associate Producers Wales

Sandra Bendelow,

Tamar Eluned Williams

Assistant Producer **Amy Marsh**

Participation Associate

Jan Reynolds



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#legendofwales

Felin Uchaf



Ysgol y Gymraeg
School of Welsh



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



CANOLFAN Y CELFYDDYDAU ABERYSTWYTH ARTS CENTRE

Photographs taken in North Wales with kind permission
of the National Trust and Snowdonia National Park.

Photography: Chris Webb Photography

Design: Tom Partridge



