

# incantation

based on a Gaelic charm transcribed in the 19th century by  
Alexander Carmichael

music by Sheena Phillips

The charm begins with a genealogy of Brigit, which should be whispered or muttered by all three singers in rough unison, in the rapid *sotto voce* manner of a Catholic woman murmuring prayers as she counts off her rosary beads. Singer S3 starts to sing as soon as the genealogy is finished (the pitch must be remembered during the whispering).

Brigit daughter of Dugall the Brown  
Son of Aodh son of Art son of Conn  
Son of Criara son Cairbre son of Cas  
Son of Cormac son of Cartach son of Conn.

The musical score is written for three voices: S1 (Singer 1), S2 (Singer 2), and A (Alto). It is in 3/2 time and begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 50. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the first four lines of the incantation. The second system contains the remaining three lines. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *poco f* (poco forte). The lyrics are: Brigit daughter of Dugall the Brown, Son of Aodh son of Art son of Conn, Son of Criara son Cairbre son of Cas, Son of Cormac son of Cartach son of Conn. The lyrics are: Bri - git, Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git of the man - tles, Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git, Bri - git. Bri - git, Bri - git. Bri - git, Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git. Bri - git of the peat - heap, Bri - git of the twi - ning hair, Bri - git of the au - gury. Bri - git. Wo - man hel - per, Bri - git of the au - gury. Bri - git. Wo - man help - er, Bri - git.

incantation 2

9

*p* *mp*

Bri-git of the white feet, Bri-git of calm-ness, Bri-git of the white palms,  
Bri-git of the white feet, Bri-git of calm-ness, Bri-git of the white palms,  
Bri-git. Bri-git. twi-ning Bri-git,

13

*mf* *mf* *mf*

Bri-git of the kine. Bri-git wo-man com-rade, Bri-git of the peat heap,  
Bri-git of the kine. Bri-git wo-man com-rade, Bri-git of the  
wo-man help-er, Bri-git, Bri-git wo-man com-rade, Bri-git of the peat heap,

16

*mf* *mf* *mp* *mp*

Bri-git, wo-man help-er, Bri-git, wo-man mild. Bri-git Bri-git.  
peat heap, Bri-git, wo-man help-er, Bri-git. Bri-git. Bri-git,  
Bri-git, wo-man help-er, Bri-git, wo-man mild. Bri-git, Bri-git. Bri-git, Bri-git.

20

*warmly mp* *mp* *mp*

Bri-git, own tress of Ma-ry, Bri-git, Nurse of Christ - - -  
Bri-git, own tress of Ma-ry, Bri-git, Nurse of Christ - Each day and each  
wo-man mild, Bri-git, of the kine, Bri-git, of the au-gu-ry, Bri-git,

incantation 3

23

Each day I say the De-scent of Bri-git: I shall not be slain,  
night that I say the De-scent of Bri-git: I shall not be slain,  
own tress of Ma-ry, Bri-git, Bri-git. I shall not be slain,

26

I shall not be woun-ded, I shall not be put in cell, I shall not be gashed.  
I shall not be woun-ded, I shall not be put in cell, I shall not be gashed.  
I shall not be woun-ded, I shall not be put in cell, I shall not be gashed.

29 *p* *mf*

Bri-git Bri-git, Bri-git, Bri-git,  
I shall not be torn in sun-der, I shall not be de-spoiled, I shall not be down-trod-den,  
I shall not be torn in sun-der, I shall not be de-spoiled, I shall not be down-trod-den,

33

I shall not be rent. Bri-git, Bri-git, Bri-git.  
I shall not be rent. Bri-git. Bri-git. Bri-git.  
I shall not be rent. Bri-git. Bri-git.

incantation 4

37 *p* *sotto voce* *pp*

Bri-git. Bri-git. Nor will Christ leaveme for-got-ten.

Bri-git. Bri-git. Bri-git. Nor will Christ leaveme for-got-ten.

Bri-git. Bri-git, Bri-git. Bri-git, Bri-git. Nor will Christ leaveme for-got-ten.

41 *mf*

Nor sun shall burn me, Nor fire shall burn me, Nor beam shall burn me, Nor moon shall burn me.

Nor sun shall burn me, Nor fire shall burn me, Nor beam shall burn me, Nor moon shall burn me.

Nor beam shall burn me, Nor moon shall burn me.

45 *f*

Nor ri-ver shall drown me, Nor brine shall drown me, Nor flood shall drown me, Nor wa-ter shall drown me.

Nor ri-ver shall drown me, Nor brine shall drown me, Nor flood shall drown me, Nor wa-ter shall drown me.

Nor ri-ver shall drown me, Nor brine shall drown me, Nor flood shall drown me, Nor wa-ter shall drown me.

49 *f*

Night-mare shall not lie on me, Black sleep shall not lie

Nor sun shall burn me, Nor fire shall burn me, Nor beam shall burn me,

Nor sun shall burn me, Nor fire shall burn me, Nor beam shall burn me,

52

on me, Spell - sleep shall not lie on me, Lu-aths luis shall not  
 Nor moon shall burn me. Nor ri-ver shall drown me, Nor brine shall drown me,  
 Nor moon shall burn me. Nor ri-ver shall drown me, Nor brine shall drown me,

55 *mp*

lie on me. Bri-git.  
*mf* *mp*  
 Nor flood shall drown me, Nor wa-ter shall drown me. My com-pan - ion is Bri-git.  
*mf* *mp*  
 Nor flood shall drown me, Nor wa-ter shall drown me. My com-pan-ion is Bri-git.

59 *mp* *mp*

Bri-git. Bri-git. Bri-git.  
*mp* *mp*  
 My com-pan - ion is Bri-git. Bri-git. Bri-git.  
*mp* *p* *p*  
 My com-pan-ion is Bri-git. Bri-git, Bri-git. Bri-git, Bri-git.

A note on the Gaelic: no translation of 'luaths luis' is given in Alexander Carmichael's original edition. However, 'luis' (pronounced 'loosh' to rhyme with 'whoosh') means herbs (or rowan), and 'luaith' (pronounced roughly 'loo-eich' to rhyme with German 'reich') means ashes; so the phrase as a whole may be a mis-transcription of 'luaith luis' meaning 'burnt herbs' or 'burnt rowan' - perhaps a remedy for certain grave illnesses.

The names in the genealogy are pronounced roughly as follows (using 'u' for the neutral schwa vowel):

Dugall ~ as in the modern name Dougal

Aodh ~ 'eugh' where 'eu' is a long form of the vowel in French 'peu' and 'gh' is a light guttural sound

Conn ~ 'kon'; Criara ~ kree-a-ru; Cairbre ~ 'kar-bru'; Cas ~ 'kas' with soft 's' (rhymes with 'lass')

Cormac ~ kor-mak with front-rolled 'r'; Cartach ~ 'Kartuch' where 'ch' is as in 'loch'