

**A PAGEANT OF MAY: I.
THE MASQUE OF
PROSERPINE; II.
THE REVELS OF MAY**

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A pageant of May: I. The masque of Proserpine; II. The revels of May by Porter Garnett

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PORTER GARNETT

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THE MASQUE OF
PROSERPINE; II.
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TO THE WOMEN OF
THE WOMAN'S PARK CLUB
WHOSE
CIVIC PRIDE
AND
CONSTRUCTIVE IDEALISM
HAVE ENABLED THEM
TO DARE AND TO ACHIEVE

291389


A PAGEANT OF MAY

- I. THE MASQUE OF PROSERPINE
- II. THE REVELS OF MAY

By
Porter Garnett

Produced by the Author in City Park, Walla Walla,
Washington, Friday and Saturday,
May 22 and 23, 1914

Under the Auspices of
THE WOMAN'S PARK CLUB
Walla Walla, Washington
1914



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FOREWORD

The history of "A Pageant of May" is briefly told. In November, 1913, the Woman's Park Club, which, in 1911, inaugurated an annual May Festival, conceived the idea of holding a pageant in our city.

Correspondence with the American Pageant Association led to the inviting of Mr. Porter Garnett of Berkeley, California (one of the directors of the association), to come to Walla Walla for a conference. Mr. Garnett arrived on March 26th. On the 30th, having in the meantime selected City Park as the most suitable site, he submitted the outline of "A Pageant of May." It was officially approved on March 31st, and the work of preparation was begun.

Since the construction of a pageant is usually a matter of many months it seems proper, in this case, to call attention to the fact that within a period of seven weeks Mr. Garnett has written the text of "A Pageant of May," designed the costumes and properties, invented the dances, selected the music and rehearsed a cast of over three hundred.

Grateful acknowledgment is made of the assistance of the Commercial Club and of the many citizens of Walla Walla who have given so generously of their time and talent, insuring the success of the "introduction of pageantry in the Northwest."

GRACE G. ISAACS
MABEL BAKER ANDERSON,
LYDIA P. SUTHERLAND
MARY SHIPMAN PENROSE
MARIE A. CATRON

*Executive Committee for the Pageant,
Woman's Park Club.*

INTRODUCTION

Although May festivals are held in almost every community, it is in the agricultural community, such as this of Walla Walla with its vicinage of fertile acres, that the celebration of spring—the season of renewal—is most appropriate.

A Pageant of May is a May festival and something more. In it, instead of restricting the ceremonies of the more or less hacknied forms, an effort has been made to utilize the traditional material and to import into it certain elements of freshness and fancy.

The intention has been not so much to give an exhibition as to afford the community an opportunity for self-expression. The real purpose of the pageant is to remind the people of Walla Walla that since they owe their existence to the soil, spring should be for them a season of sincere and spontaneous rejoicing. It should not be necessary to cajole them into celebrating this season which brings in bud and blossom an earnest of the harvest to come. They should not only be willing but eager to make merry on the Green and to dance around the May-poles. They should remember that the earth which gives them sustenance is not their servant but their mistress and that without her generous gifts they would be poor indeed. A Pageant of May offers them an opportunity to pay their homage to Earth the Giver whom the Greeks personified and worshipped as the goddess Demeter (Ceres).

In the Masque of Proserpine, which forms the first part of the pageant, the return of spring is treated symbolically. The myth upon which the masque is built has, on account of its peculiar appropriateness, been used at various times and in various ways to celebrate the season of rebirth, but the present adaptation with its free use of comedy is entirely original. It has been necessary, of course, to take many liberties with the accepted versions, notably the excision of that part of the myth which deals with Ceres' wanderings

in search of Proserpine. Those who may be desirous of reading the myth in its most charming form are referred to the translation of an Homeric hymn which Walter Pater incorporated in his essay, *Demeter and Persephone*, contained in his volume *The Greek Spirit*.

The second part of the pageant is based upon the traditional English May Day celebrations. The traditions, however, are by no means strictly followed for there seems to be no justification for a rigid adherence in America to customs which are essentially English. I have used Robin Hood and his Merrie Men because, through literature, they have been made the heritage of all English-speaking people; I have, however, omitted the Morris-dance because, in America, it has no significance whatever.

Since it is hoped that the pageant will be interpreted throughout in a spirit of gaiety; since the participants will be expected to forget (as far as possible) that there are any spectators, the spontaneity which is difficult to attain rather than the expertness which is comparatively easy will be looked for in the May-pole and other dances. To Mrs. E. R. Ormsbee's able direction is due whatever measure of success may be achieved in this regard. The Dance of the Seeds and the Dance of the Fruits and Flowers owe the charm of their form and detail to the inventive fancy and skill of Miss Rachel Drum.

In both the Masque and the Revels realism has been scrupulously avoided because in the author's opinion realism on the stage is inartistic and futile. There is no reason why a pageant—whether of the historical or festival type—should not be consistently expressed in terms of beauty.

To this end the masque feature has been employed as affording the best possible means by which the note of beauty may be introduced. I believe that the introduction of the masque feature in all pageants, by increasing the gap which already exists between formal and creative pageantry and the familiar tawdriness of the street-fair and carnival, would do more to raise the standard of pageantry than any other single thing.

The text of *A Pageant of May* has been reduced to the simplest possible terms. It contains no more lines than were necessary to unfold the plot and deliver the message. The lines, moreover, have been uniformly written with the fact in view that they were to be delivered and delivered in the open air. Syllables that open the mouth have been

more important therefore than poetic embellishments. As far as possible pantomime has been used to reveal the story. A Pageant of May is not intended for closet reading, and if the reader who did not see its realization in action on the four-acre stage in Walla Walla's city park finds it somewhat jejune he is asked to bear that fact in mind.

I cannot leave unexpressed my grateful acknowledgements to the members of the Costume Committee who have worked most efficiently under the direction of Mrs. A. J. Gillis, the designing of the children's costumes being admirably done by Miss Helen Barr and Mrs. W. E. Most. To the chairmen and members of the other committees, and to the organizers and chaperones of the various groups I am indebted for the invaluable assistance which they have rendered. Finally, I would take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the women of the Executive Committee who, putting aside every consideration of personal convenience, have labored indefatigably for the success of the pageant and the benefit of the community.

P. G.

Walla Walla, Washington.
May 14, 1914.