

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### OVERVIEW

Although this musical production is to be presented as entertainment, the underlying drama, morals and principles are deadly serious. The story, though acknowledging that abortion takes place in this modern world, is 100% pro life. However, rather than take the more predictable black and white stance, the story makes no judgements but intends to leave the audience in no doubt that the sanctity of life is paramount.

It addresses the issue of abortion by attempting to bring the future (in supernatural form) and the present together in such a way that it becomes difficult to separate one from the other.

The presence of aborted children in a supernatural but developed teenage state makes it uncomfortable for anyone to perceive the unborn child or foetus as anything less than a human person. Society can conveniently refer to the act of abortion as 'termination and to the baby as 'foetus' or 'it'.

This play attempts to confront these cover ups with the reality, but in a way that does not openly condemn. This is not a soft pedal but a deliberate strategy to minimise the defensiveness that can so easily arise from people who believe that abortion has a place and for women who have had an abortion to feel more receptive to the hope that underpins this play.

If a woman, considering an abortion was confronted with an image or vision of a representative of that very child in teenage form, I suspect that it would be very difficult to go ahead with it. Clearly, the reality is that a woman is not going to see a vision of her own child but the memory of seeing this play may prompt their own imagination.

And so to the story: Rachel, a young girl of seventeen, dreams of her ideal man who she hopes one day to meet.

At a subsequent disco she meets Mark and is attracted to him. Their relationship develops and they spend a night together which results in Rachel becoming pregnant. She dreads telling her Mother who she knows she will have a bad time with. The Mother is hostile and shows no support to Rachel.

The Mother pushes the problems of her young age, the shame, what people will say and so on. Rachel fights with herself over what to do but fearful of being cast out by her Mother, reluctantly, goes ahead with an abortion. Mark does not realise what has gone on and Rachel finishes the relationship as she does not feel she is worthy of him now. Mark is devastated but they separate.

The second half of the drama opens with the imagined supernatural world of aborted children (about ten young people) looked after by a maternal angel called Phelio. One of these children is Rachel's child and through the music and lyrics a chemistry of sorts begins to develop between the child and Rachel, initially through a dream. Through the power of love, understanding and forgiveness the children live in hope of an ultimate union with their earthly mothers.

This element of hope is also intended for those who themselves have been 'victims' or given the opportunity, would turn back the clock. It does not suggest that reunion would be an automatic follow on in every instance as this would be for God to judge. Whilst it may well be possible to present this drama without music, the music plays an important and integral role in the development of emotion and the credibility of what is being portrayed. It seems to me that 'songs' can convey a meaning that might otherwise be difficult to express.

**Mike Donnelly**



# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### CHARACTERS IN THIS DRAMA

#### **Rachel**

a girl of 17 yrs (or so) who can act and sing – she is the main character portraying her part in a romance that goes sadly wrong.

#### **Mark**

Rachel's boyfriend of around the same age-he should also be able to sing and act.

#### **Rachel's Mum (Maureen)**

she could be 35 to 40 ish –a strong minded woman who does not take well to being thrust into a public drama concerning her daughters behaviour.

#### **Rachel's Dad (Reg)**

far more affable and easy going especially with Rachel - he has always tended to play second fiddle to his wife.

#### **Rachel's child**

a child in early teens who plays the part of the spiritual form of Rachel's aborted baby.

#### **Spirit children**

a group of between 8 -10 early teens who represent all the world's aborted or miscarried children. They have one song in which they sing (Children of sadness).the rest of their presence is to take part in dance.

#### **Phelio**

an angel guardian (can be any age) whose role is to care for this group of spirit children.

#### **The choir**

a group of mixed voices who act out an additional narrative voice in song form- they are set apart from the acting area, perhaps in the wings or at the foot of the stage.

#### **Narrator**

single spoken voice who adds link narrations between scenes –this person can stand at the edge of the stage or acting area or can simply be an out of sight voice who threads the story together

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### SCENE GUIDANCE

There are twenty scenes and twenty five pieces of music (*see 'Notes For Shortened Version' for reduced production running time*), some for the characters, some for the choir and some that are stand alone pieces such as the **OVERTURE**, **BALLET** and **DANCE OF THE SPIRITS**. There is a full score for vocals and instruments and a comprehensive backing CD where musical resources or time are limited.

#### OVERTURE

In the full version this can be played as a build up to the commencement of the opening scene ie before the curtains draw back or prior to the actor appearing. In the shortened version this can be played quietly against the voice of the narrator before the alternative starting point (**GROWING PAINS**)

#### SCENE 1

Rachel sings her first song (**RACHEL'S DREAM**). The props here can be simple ie a straight back chair. As she starts her daydreaming song she could sit facing the audience with her arms resting on the back of the chair. As the song progresses she could get up and sing, slowly walking around the stage. The audience will hopefully pick up the romantic dreaming of a young girl who has never tasted love. A dimming of the lights at the end of the song can prelude the opening up of the next scene which is a disco.

#### SCENE 2

Flashing lights against a dimmed background should convey the atmosphere of a disco dance floor. The group of teenagers (used later as spirits) can be part of the dance scene. Rachel and Mark are drawn to each other and dance together until the music ends and the lights fade. A light hearted distraction during the disco scene is to have a choreographed dance routine of the teenagers (this provides a contrast against more sombre scenes to come.) At the end of the music the teenagers walk off the stage slowly in different directions leaving Rachel and Mark alone.

#### SCENE 3

In this scene Rachel and Mark on the stage alone hold a vocal dialogue with each other whilst maintaining a slow waltz posture. The song (**LOVE WALTZ**) poses questions of uncertainty, especially from Rachel, about how the relationship will work out. At each chorus the speed of the waltz movement can be speeded up in a circular motion as they sing the chorus words 'Round and around'. The last few notes of the 'outro' can end with the couple entwining in a hug.



# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### SCENE 4

Having developed a more intimate relationship as lovers Rachel and Mark express their feelings towards each other in duet form. (YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE)

There need be no props just the couple walking slowly around the stage stopping and singing to each other when it is their turn to sing. During the musical interlude the couple can walk together slowly (holding hands) and from time to time just stopping and looking at each other. The scene can end with a kiss or an embrace.

### SCENE 5 [*\*Shorter version could begin here - see 'Notes For Shortened Version'*]

(‘GROWING PAINS’) Having discovered from her doctor that she is pregnant Rachel sings of the contrast between her earlier fantasies and the harsh reality of life. How does she tell her Mother and what will the reaction be? In her mind she desperately seeks the support of Mark to help her through this dilemma but she is alone. Again no props are really needed - Rachel just sings out to the audience as if they are able to offer support. As the lights dim Rachel bows her head and puts her hands over her face representing the intensity of her thoughts.

Between scenes 5 and 6 the choir sing ‘MAKE UP YOUR MIND’

### SCENE 6, 7 and 8

The next three scenes are closely linked 6) Rachel tells her Mum and Dad 7) The parents reactions to each other 8) The Mum’s sense of being the ‘bad guy’.

The three scenes should be played out as if they were seamless ie after telling her parents Rachel exits the stage crying, leaving her parents to argue with each other about their respective thoughts. Dad then leaves the stage in a huff whilst Mum remains and reflects on her own life and justification for her stance against Rachel and Reg.

A table and a couple of chairs help to represent the kitchen where this triangle of views takes place. The Dad is a bit of a ‘softie’ where Rachel is concerned whereas Maureen is reactive and seems more concerned about what people will think.

During the dialogue between Maureen and Reg there is a short musical interlude put in to allow some sense of Maureen’s annoyance with Reg. She turns away from him glancing back occasionally with her arms folded. Each time Reg turns his head away but in the end has had enough and leaves after the final duet verse.

After Maureen’s vocal reflections the lights should dim on her and fade out leaving the stage in darkness ready for the next scene.

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### SCENE 9

Lights open to dimmed as Rachel slowly walks around the stage, head slightly down as she monotonizes the words of 'QUEST'. This is a sombre few moments as Rachel tries to come to a decision about the pregnancy. She is pulled one way and then another as the pressures weigh heavy on her mind. There are moments of brightness as she considers the wonders of having a child. This is quite a dramatic acting scene for the person playing Rachel as this is really the heart of the drama. Props or backdrops are not really necessary as the song says it all.

Between scenes 9 and 10' the Choir sings 'NOWHERE TO HIDE'. It should follow on almost immediately after 'QUEST' has ended.

### SCENE 10

Rachel and Mark act out this scene in duet form. Rachel tries to tell Mark that there is no future in their relationship, though she had not told him about the abortion. Mark in turn tries desperately to convince Rachel that she is wrong to end the relationship. The table and chairs from the earlier kitchen scene might provide a focus for this dialogue as this provides some opportunity to get up at points and so break up the sameness of the scene.

Between scenes 10 and 11 the Choir sings 'MARTYR OR FOOL'

### SCENE 11

This scene ends the first half of the drama. Mark is alone on the stage and facing the audience. He sings out his confusion about Rachel to the audience as if he was talking to a counsellor. Mark could start off still sitting at the table (Rachel will have already left) but get up as the song progresses and move nearer to the edge of the stage so that it looks like he is engaging the audience. At the end the lights can go off and curtains close for a short intermission.

### SCENE 12

This is the commencement of the supernatural part of the drama. The Choir sing an impassioned 'ORA PRO NOBIS' and as the final chord fades away the lights come on to show a group of young teens in a happy yet transitional state.



# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### INTERMISSION

#### SCENE 13

The intro starts immediately for the teens song 'CHILDREN OF SADNESS'. They could just stand in a line if there are only a few but if a dozen or more it could be more effective for them to stand in a tiered group. Arm movements (all doing the same) could be choreographed here especially as the phrase 'We' of the 'We are the children of sadness' is a long note and needs some sort of movement. The Choir join in gently with the chorus background. When the song is finished the children move to the back of the stage and sit cross legged on the floor.

#### SCENE 14

Rachel's child does not have a name in this drama because she had never been given any specific identity. When the intro of her song begins she slowly and deliberately rises (as she is part of the young group) and moves to the front of the stage facing the audience. Very simply she sings her song (RACHEL'S CHILD) and when the outro music is playing she moves back to join the others in the cross legged position.

#### SCENE 15

The children all arise together as the music begins for 'DANCE OF THE SPIRITS' and perform a choreographed waltz time dance. When first performed it was effective that all the children were dressed in a chiffon type of material that had subtle colours and picked up the lights very well. It created a sort of fairy like effect which suited the fact that they were spirits dancing. When the song ends the children (except for Rachel's child) return to a cross legged posture but spread to create little groups around the stage. The lights go to black.

#### SCENE 16

When the lights come on again Rachel is lying on the floor asleep (Props- pillow and small blanket) at the front of the stage with the children behind her in groups. When the music for this ballet style dance (DREAMING) is playing Rachel's child dances in and around the groups of children every now and then coming to the front and bending lower as if she was trying to gently touch her mother whilst she is sleeping. Rachel's child returns to sit with one of the groups and after a short pause Rachel wakes as if subconsciously aware of what has taken place and after the short intro music sings 'Our Father' It is sung twice, the second time supported with the choir. With a dramatic closing AMEN the lights should fade out allowing a few moments for the next scene to be set up.

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### SCENE 17

The children all clammer silently around their guardian angel (Phelio) as if agitated by the chemistry that appeared to have been built up between Rachel and her child. Phelio settles them down around her in a circle and sings to them the comforting and reassuring song 'WHEN A CHILD HAS LOVE' The scene closes with the lights dimming out gradually.

### SCENE 18

When the lights come back on Rachel and Mark who have become reconciled sing together their duet (REPRISE of 'YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE'-last verse.) After their long last note they move to the side of the stage slowly arm in arm as Phelio and Maureen enter the stage from the other side. The lights can stay on but an additional spot light or downward spot helps to make it clear that Phelio and Maureen are speaking to each other through different dimensions

### SCENE 19

Phelio and Maureen sing their duet ('A NEW TOMORROW') standing back to back (highlighting the fact that they are not physically aware of each other)as they move towards the end of their song the whole company slowly filters in from both sides behind them.

### SCENE 20

As soon as the song ends the FINALE music intro begins and everyone sings the last verse of 'WHEN A CHILD HAS LOVE' ending with a stirring finale chord. A sudden black out adds to the cue for hopeful applause when the lights come back on.

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### NARRATION NOTES

The following narrations can be spoken to link the storyline together more clearly:

#### **Narration 1- between scenes 1&2**

Rachel's day dream of the man she will one day meet comes alive when she is attracted to a young man called Mark at a local disco.

#### **Narration 2- between scenes 3&4**

Rachel and Mark see more and more of each other as the weeks go by and soon become lovers. After one such night together they begin to express how they feel about their relationship.

#### **Narration 3 –between scenes 4&5.**

After a visit to her Doctor, Rachel learns that she is pregnant. She is scared and tries to think things through.

#### **Narration 4- between scenes 8&9**

Rachel feels alone and wrestles with her thoughts. She is afraid to continue with the pregnancy without the support of her family, but something holds her back from telling Mark.

#### **Narration 5 – between scenes 12 & 13**

These young people represent all aborted children in their spiritual life. Their song underlines their sense of obscurity and their need to be identified.

#### **Narration 6 – between scenes 15 & 16**

Whilst Rachel sleeps, her child attempts to communicate with her through a telepathic vision. When Rachel awakes, the desire to respond is strong and she turns to the only prayer she can remember.

#### **Narration 7 –between scenes 16 & 17**

The children become agitated and turn to Phelio, their spiritual guardian, to help them. Phelio gathers the children around her and soothes away their anxiety with her gentle words.

#### **Narration 8 – between scenes 17 & 18**

Back on earth, Rachel and Mark find themselves again and later, Rachel's Mum, Maureen and Phelio, exchange thoughts independently across the dimension of earth and eternity.

# RACHEL'S SONG

## *director's notes*

### NOTES FOR SHORTENED VERSION

If it is necessary for your production to have a shorter running time, it is possible to cut 25 - 30 minutes from the Musical.

The narration below can be used against the background music of either the '**OVERTURE**' or '**RACHEL'S DREAM**'. This way the drama can actually begin with the song '**GROWING PAINS**'. (Cutting either **OVERTURE** or **RACHEL'S DREAM**, in addition to **DISCO, LOVE WALTZ**, and **YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE** from the first act, and the option of cutting **ORA PRO NOBIS** from the second act.)

Whilst this loses some of the initial music and songs it does not materially alter the essence or storyline during the first Act. The second Act, being more ethereal, does need the full range of songs and music in order to convey the more difficult concept of life after death for aborted babies. As mentioned, the initial opening music of the second act, '**ORA PRO NOBIS**' could be omitted if the drama still feels too long for the time slot you may have; the act then starting with '**CHILDREN OF SADNESS**'.

#### **Narration:**

Rachel, a young girl of seventeen dreams of the day that she would meet her soul mate and the life they would have together. At a local Disco she meets a young man called Mark who she is immediately attracted to. They spend more and more time together and eventually become lovers. After some months of seeing Mark, Rachel discovers she is pregnant and goes to see her GP . The opening song '**GROWING PAINS**' reflects the change in Rachel's mind from previous daydreaming fantasy to the world of reality. (The last sentence being spoken slowly and deliberately as a cue to the first opening scene)